



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Thesis scanned from best copy available:  
may contain faint or blurred text, and / or  
cropped or missing pages.

### Digitisation notes:

*The traditional process of producing a house in Arabia during the 18th and 19th centuries : a case-study of Hedjāz*

Jomah, Hisham Abdul Salam M.

PhD

1992

Three fould-outs could not be scanned  
due to their size. If you would like to see  
them, please contact: [is-crc@ed.ac.uk](mailto:is-crc@ed.ac.uk)

THE TRADITIONAL PROCESS OF PRODUCING A HOUSE  
IN ARABIA DURING THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES:  
A CASE-STUDY OF ḤEDJĀZ

HISHAM ABDUL SALAM M. JOMAH

PH.D THESIS  
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE  
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

July, 1992







**In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.**

## **DECLARATION**

\* This research is my original work and has been composed solely by myself.

\* A version of part of Chapter Seven (The House and its Socio-Cultural Environment) has been published as "The Hejazi House as a Microcosm" in Sacred Architecture in the Traditions of China, India, Judaism and Islam. Ed. Emily Lyle, Edinburgh University Press, 1992.

**Hisham A. S. Jomah**

## ABSTRACT

---

This thesis describes an investigation of the traditional houses of the western region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (the Ḥedjāz region) which has aimed at identifying the cultural core of the region's domestic architecture and its components, and the environmental elements that were most supportive of that core. Since these traditional houses are no longer the prevailing type of dwelling, and the lifestyles that operated in them have also vanished, the research drew upon the experience of elderly Ḥedjāzī *mu'allemin* (master-builders) who are among the few surviving traditional architects. As the descendants of many generations of builders, their knowledge covers a large span of the history of the craft, as well as familiarity with the social convictions of Ḥedjāz extending from the traditional period (18th century AD) until today. Further interviews with prominent families who had lived in traditional houses have also helped to reconstruct both the physical and socio-cultural processes of producing the traditional houses of Ḥedjāz.

The study of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house reveals that they each and collectively represented a pattern of relationships, the aims of which were to bring order, integrity and meaning to peoples' lives - a series of connections between person, group, house and the world. The traditional Ḥedjāzī's effort to make the home a sacred place served both to legitimise the group itself and its occupation of the land, for in this way the town at large, and the home within it, formed a part of divinely-ordered nature rather than being a merely human creation. The design and building processes provide a clear evidence of the desire for correspondence between man, universe and building, each of them a 'dwelling' in the true sense. This expressed the idea of a supreme unifying order in the universe which is embodied in man. It is this order that the traditional *mu'allemin* has tried to grasp and interpret in his work. This central idea was reinforced by rituals, language and by the building itself. Various forms and metaphors were employed which served as devices to remind people of the primordial event from which all order was generated.

The study also describes how the economic changes that the region experienced in the middle 1900s culminated in tremendous socio-cultural changes. The shifts in the

traditional perceptions of self, group, land and home as one entity, to a modern more individualistic and competitive society led to the disintegration of the traditional Hedjāzī culture and to a loss of identity, meaning and purpose, all of which were immediately reflected on the domestic architecture of the region. Homes became commodities, and architecture became the medium for advertising the socio-economic status of Hedjāzī families. The problems of reviving the cultural identity of Hedjāz based on the traditional sources of cultural authenticity are discussed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

---

**In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful**

**Praise be to God, to Whom belong all things in the heavens and on earth: to Him be praise in the hereafter: and He is full of wisdom, acquainted with all things. (Qur'ān, Sūrah XXXIV: 1, Sabā').**

Among the many individuals who contributed to the completion of this work, I should first single out my father Dr 'Abdul Salām and my dear mother who, besides giving me life, gave me everything else. Likewise, my brother Dr Ḥosām who was always my example of dedication and hard work. As for the lasting smile in my life, my sister Manāl, I owe her more than a great deal.

I am especially indebted to the dearest of my friends, Mr Ṭalāl 'Oraif, a brother and a faithful companion throughout the period of data gathering. His contribution to this work is beyond thanks. Also Mr Ḥussain Jār, my architect friend who arranged the interviews with the elderly builders of Ḥedjāz in Jeddah and played the key role in the communication and interpretation process between those distinguished builders and myself. My thanks are also due to Mr Sa'ūd Maḥjūb, the gifted landscape architect and photographer who kindly made his slide library available to the use of this research and to the enhancement of the communication with the traditional builders of Ḥedjāz. Many thanks to architect Khāled 'Abdou who arranged the interviews with the head of the building guild of Al-Madinah and provided accommodation for the team for a number of days. The support and dedication of those friends were indispensable during the tiring travels around the cities of the Ḥedjāz. They truly rewrote the book of friendship.

I am indebted to the *mu'allemīn* of Ḥedjāz who gave me their time, effort and valuable experience. In particular *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin of Jeddah (may God bless his soul and forgive him), *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī of Jeddah, and *mu'allem* Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rīfī of Al-Madinah. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of all the members of the families of al-Makkī and 'Afīf who shared with me their past recollections and entrusted me some of their private memories. Their narrations of the lifestyles of 18th and 19th centuries houses of Makkah, Jeddah and

Al-Madinah were as vivid and detailed as any historical research could be. I thank them all for their generosity.

I would like to acknowledge the support, the patience and the intelligence of Professor Barrie Wilson, a true teacher to whom I am grateful for allowing me to discover my path, yet always in the knowledge that he was there. He directed my thoughts along the path they travel in this research, and has consistently given me wise and forbearing advice on this, as on many other subjects.

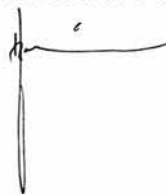
Special thanks and gratitude goes to my family-in-law who were always there for me, from giving me an extremely supportive wife, to their unimpeded encouragement until the day of submitting this work. The fatherly support of Mr Yāsīn to my little family helped it to survive difficult times. I must also express my thanks to Samir Colour laboratories, owners, management and staff who supplied me with the photographic material necessary for this research and other projects. Their kind assistance will never be forgotten.

To my friends and colleagues at the University of Edinburgh, especially Mr ‘Alī ‘Aṭwa and Mr Khāled al-Barrāq, and to all my Scottish friends, especially my faithful neighbour Mr Jim Grant, I am thankful for the good times we shared together in this beautiful city.

To my wife Şaba, and my sons - ‘Abdul Karīm and ‘Abdul Ḥakīm - goes my sincere appreciation, adoration, gratitude, and acknowledgement. To them I already dedicated my life.

This work would not exist without these valued contributions, but for the end product I bear full responsibility.

Hishām A. S. Jom‘ah

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line with a small hook at the top and a horizontal line extending to the right.

## DEDICATION

---

I dedicate this work to my parents, who showed me through their shining example that home is much more than just a house, and who gave me the emotional and material support so that someday I might find the words to write it down.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

ABSTRACT .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xv
LIST OF TABLES .....	xx
SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION .....	xxi
 INTRODUCTION .....	 1
 CHAPTER ONE	
THE LAND OF ḤEDJĀZ .....	7
Introduction .....	7
1.1. The physical environment .....	8
1.1.1. The natural environment .....	8
1.1.1.1. Geography .....	8
1.1.1.2. Geology .....	11
1.1.1.3. Climate .....	12
1.1.1.4. Vegetation .....	13
1.1.2. The built environment .....	14
1.1.2.1. Makkah .....	15
1.1.2.2. Jeddah .....	17
1.1.2.3. Al-Madinah .....	19
1.2. The social environment .....	20
1.2.1. The political environment .....	20
1.2.2. The family in Ḥedjāz ( <i>‘ā’ilah</i> ) .....	24



1.2.2.1. Social structure of Ḥedjāzī families . . . . .	25
1.2.2.2. Social relations between members of 'ā'ilāt, 'āwā'il . . . . .	26
A) The husband-wife relationship . . . . .	29
B) The parent-children relationship . . . . .	30
C) The family-outsider relationship . . . . .	31
1.2.3. The socio-economic environment . . . . .	32
 <b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
<b>THE CRISES: CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ḤEDJĀZ</b>	35
Introduction . . . . .	35
2.1. The process of social transformation . . . . .	37
 <b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
<b>THE HOUSE IN TRADITIONAL ḤEDJĀZ</b> . . . . .	49
Introduction . . . . .	49
3.1. The physical morphology of Ḥedjāzī towns . . . . .	50
3.1.1. The urban fabric of traditional Ḥedjāzī towns . . . . .	50
3.1.1.1. <i>Ḥāra, Maḥallah</i> (Residential quarter) . . . . .	51
3.1.1.2. <i>Sūq</i> (Market-place) . . . . .	53
3.1.1.3. <i>Masdjed, Jāmi'</i> (Mosque) . . . . .	53
3.1.1.4. <i>Shawāri', Aziqqah, Dorūb</i> (Pedestrian and traffic network) . . . . .	54
3.2. The physical morphology of the Ḥedjāzī house . . . . .	55
3.3. Components of typical Ḥedjāzī houses . . . . .	60
3.3.1. Subterranean level . . . . .	60
3.3.2. Ground floor/Lower floors . . . . .	60
3.3.2.1. <i>Bāb al-madkhal</i> (Entrance, doorway) . . . . .	61

3.3.2.2. <i>Dihlīz</i> (Entrance-hall, lobby) . . . . .	61
3.3.2.3 <i>Daradj, sullam</i> (Staircase) . . . . .	61
3.3.2.4. <i>Digaisī</i> (Storage space) . . . . .	62
3.3.2.5. <i>Maq'ad</i> (Sitting-room) . . . . .	62
3.3.2.6. <i>Rowshān, Mashrābiyyah, Ṭāgah, Shīsh</i> (Bay- windows, balconies, windows, blinds, shutters) . .	64
3.3.2.7. <i>Qabū</i> (Basement) . . . . .	65
3.3.2.8. <i>Ṣehrīdj, Khazzān</i> (Water-tank) . . . . .	66
3.3.2.9. <i>Finā', Housh</i> (Courtyard, walled-yard) . . . . .	66
3.3.3. First floor/Upper floors . . . . .	66
3.3.3.1. <i>Madjlis</i> (Living, reception-room) . . . . .	66
3.3.3.2. <i>Mu'akhir, Mu'akhkhar</i> (Rear-room) . . . . .	68
3.3.3.3. <i>Ṣuffah</i> (Antechamber) . . . . .	68
3.3.3.4. <i>Khazānah, Makhzan</i> (Storage-room) . . . . .	69
3.3.3.5. <i>Bait al-Mā, Merḥāq, Ṭahārah</i> (Water-closet, toilet) . . . . .	69
3.3.3.6. <i>Maṭbakh, Mūrakkab</i> (Kitchen) . . . . .	70
3.3.3.7. <i>Mabīt</i> (Night-room) . . . . .	71
3.3.3.8. <i>Khārdjah, Ṣuṭuḥ</i> (Roof-top terrace) . . . . .	71
3.3.4. Other features of the house . . . . .	72
3.3.4.1. <i>Niqūsh, Zakhāriff</i> (Decorations, ornamentation) . . . . .	72
3.3.4.2. <i>Shughul al-khashab, A'māl al-Nidjārah</i> (Woodwork and carpentry) . . . . .	73
3.3.5. Special ground floor arrangement: the case of Al- Madinah . . . . .	74
3.3.5.1. <i>Housh</i> (Open-court) . . . . .	74
3.3.5.2. <i>Dīwān</i> (Reception-hall, sitting-room) . . . . .	74
3.3.5.3. <i>Qā'ah</i> (Hall) . . . . .	75

3.3.5.4. <i>Minwar</i> (Staircase light-well) . . . . .	76
3.3.5.5. <i>Jilā, Bādāhandj, Bāzahandj</i> (Skylight) . . . . .	76
3.3.6. Simple Turkish houses (16th/17th century) . . . . .	76
3.4. Typology of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house . . . . .	78
3.4.1. Contrast with houses of other Muslim countries . . . . .	81
3.5. The social morphology of the Ḥedjāzī house . . . . .	86
3.5.1. Relationships between spaces and household activities . . . . .	86
3.5.1.1. Activities of the house . . . . .	87
3.5.1.2. Use of space and its effects on domestic architecture . . . . .	90
 <b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
<b>ORAL HISTORY AS A SOURCE OF TRADITION . . . . .</b>	<b>93</b>
Introduction . . . . .	93
4.1. Goals and objectives of the interviews . . . . .	94
4.1.1. Goals . . . . .	94
4.1.2. Immediate objectives . . . . .	95
4.2. Procedure and techniques . . . . .	97
4.3. Limitations and advantages . . . . .	102
4.4. The informants . . . . .	103
4.4.1. About <i>mu'allem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin</i> . . . . .	107
 <b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
<b>THE BUILDING GUILD . . . . .</b>	<b>112</b>
Introduction . . . . .	112

5.1. The nature and organization of the building guild . . . . .	112
5.2. Authority and obligation of members of the building guild . . . . .	117

## CHAPTER SIX

<b>THE PROCESS OF PRODUCING A HOUSE . . . . .</b>	<b>121</b>
Introduction . . . . .	121
6.1. The design and building processes . . . . .	122
6.1.1. <i>Al-Bedāiyyah</i> (Initiation) . . . . .	122
6.1.2. <i>Talbīq al-arḍ, Fiṣlat al-bait</i> (Matching the land and the house-image, tailoring the house) . . . . .	124
6.1.3. <i>Al-Qabūl</i> (Acceptance, agreement) . . . . .	128
6.1.4. <i>Raṣḍ al-sīsān, Ḥafr al-asāsāt</i> (Foundation layout) . . . . .	130
6.1.5. <i>Raṣṣ al-ḥadjar</i> (Brickwork, brick-laying) . . . . .	133
6.1.6. <i>Raf' al-binā', Baqiyyat al-adwār</i> (Typical floor construction) . . . . .	140
6.1.7. <i>Liyāsah, al-Biyāḍ, āl-Tangīl</i> (Plastering, painting) . . . . .	145
6.1.8. <i>Tarkīb al-abwāb, al-rawāshīn wa al-shīshān</i> (Installation of doors, windows, blinds and wooden parapets) . . . . .	148
6.1.9. <i>Taslīm al-bait</i> (Presenting the house to the client) . . . . .	154
6.1.10. <i>Taosī' al-bait</i> (Extension of the house) . . . . .	156
6.1.11. <i>Ta' līq al-bait</i> (Suspending the structure of the house) . .	158

## CHAPTER SEVEN

<b>THE HOUSE AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT . . . . .</b>	<b>165</b>
Introduction . . . . .	165
7.1. Rituals and symbolism associated with the house . . . . .	166
7.1.1. The traditional Ḥedjāzī perception of man and the universe . . . . .	166
7.1.2. The traditional Ḥedjāzī perception of man and the house . . . . .	167
7.1.3. The traditional Ḥedjāzī's perception of house and the universe . . . . .	178

7.1.4. Other socio-cultural aspects associated with the house . . . . .	179
7.2. Privacy in the traditional Hedjāzī house . . . . .	188
7.2.1. Physical controls . . . . .	192
7.2.2. Implicit codes versus explicit norms and rules for social control of privacy . . . . .	197
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT</b>	
<b>THE TRADITIONAL HEDJĀZĪ SENSE OF PLACE . . . . .</b>	<b>204</b>
Introduction . . . . .	204
8.1. House and home from a traditional Hedjāzī perspective . . . . .	208
8.1.1. The three homes: body, dwelling, and the universe . . . . .	210
8.1.1.1. The internal world: within the boundaries of the house . . . . .	224
8.1.1.2. Sex roles and perception of the internal world . . . . .	230
8.1.1.3 The external world and the unity of parts . . . . .	235
<b>CHAPTER NINE</b>	
<b>SOCIO-CULTURAL LIMITATIONS ON PRODUCTION IN THE TRADITIONAL HEDJĀZĪ HOUSE . . . . .</b>	<b>248</b>
Introduction . . . . .	248
9.1. Ethics and morals of the producers of the traditional Hedjāzī house . . . . .	249
9.2. Social values of <i>mu'allemin</i> as sources of architectural 'aesthetics' . . . . .	251
9.2.1. 'Itgān, 'Ikmāl (Proper completion, fulfilment) . . . . .	252
9.2.2. 'Amānah, Şidg (Faithfulness, honesty) . . . . .	253
9.2.3. 'Ikhlāş, Herş, Mutāb'ah, Tadgīg (Sincerity, follow-up,	

quality-control) . . . . .	255
9.2.4. <i>Nashāt, Himmah, Muthābarah</i> (Industriousness, persistence) . . . . .	257
9.2.5. <i>'Ishrāk, 'Istishārah</i> (Consultation, involvement, sympathy) . . . . .	258
9.2.6. <i>Al-ḥirṣ 'ala mashā'ir al-nās</i> (Caring about, courtesy to others) . . . . .	261
9.2.7. <i>Tanḍīm al-'amal, Takḥṭiṭ 'alā ilmadā alba'īd</i> (Organization and long-term planning) . . . . .	262
9.2.8. <i>'Iḥsās, Zoug, Tadjmīl</i> (Sensitivity, taste, beautification) . . . . .	264
9.2.9. <i>Ṣiyyānah, Ramramah, Tadjdīd</i> (Maintenance, renovation) . . . . .	265
9.2.10. <i>Twāzūn kā twāzūn al-'insān</i> (Equilibrium, balance as that of man) . . . . .	267
9.3. Tolerance and extent of change within the traditional Ḥedjāzī house . . . . .	268
9.3.1. The role and perception of <i>mu'allemin</i> in the house production . . . . .	268
9.4. Traditional design criteria . . . . .	278

## CHAPTER TEN

### CONSTANT AND VARIABLE ELEMENTS IN

### THE TRADITIONAL ḤEDJĀZĪ HOUSE . . . . . 288

Introduction . . . . .	288
------------------------	-----

10.1. Constants and variables in the traditional Ḥedjāzī house . . . . .	289
--	-----

10.1.1. The constants . . . . .	289
---------------------------------	-----

10.1.1.1. Adherence to religion . . . . .	289
---	-----

10.1.1.2. Climatic consonance . . . . .	291
---	-----

10.1.1.3. Client participation . . . . .	293
10.1.1.4. Gradual growth . . . . .	293
10.1.1.5. Everyday use . . . . .	295
10.1.1.6. Meaning . . . . .	297
10.1.1.7. Privacy . . . . .	299
10.1.1.8. Common cultural language . . . . .	300
10.1.1.9. Group solidarity . . . . .	303
10.1.1.10. Self-representation . . . . .	305
10.1.1.11. Ownership . . . . .	306
10.1.1.12. Hierarchical order of age . . . . .	307
10.1.1.13. Inside-outside relationships . . . . .	308
10.1.1.14. Neighbourhood configuration . . . . .	309
10.1.1.15. Spatial organization of the house . . . . .	311
10.1.1.16. Multi-purpose rooms . . . . .	313
10.1.1.17. Building materials . . . . .	314
10.1.2. The variables . . . . .	316
10.1.2.1. House form . . . . .	317
10.1.2.2. House size . . . . .	319
10.1.2.3. Furniture . . . . .	320

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **SOCIETAL CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON**

#### **DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE . . . . . 324**

##### **11.1. Social change and its impact . . . . . 324**

###### **11.1.1. Social transformation . . . . . 325**

###### **11.1.2. Consequence of social transformation . . . . . 328**

###### **11.1.2.1. A shift in the adherence to religion . . . . . 329**

###### **11.1.2.2. A shift in the cultural language . . . . . 332**

###### **11.1.2.3. A shift in the perception of family and group . . . . . 338**

###### **11.1.2.4. A shift in the perception of self . . . . . 342**

11.1.2.5. A shift in the perception of house, home and its range . . . . .	346
11.1.2.6. Shifts in the perception of the role of the designer and builder . . . . .	356
 <b>CHAPTER TWELVE</b>	
<b>AUTHENTICITY, INNOVATION AND IMITATION . . . . .</b>	<b>367</b>
Introduction . . . . .	367
12.1. Authenticity, innovation and imitation . . . . .	368
12.1.1. When does a building become an authentic work of architecture? . . . . .	372
12.1.1.1. Authenticity through everyday use . . . . .	374
12.1.1.2. Authenticity through unity . . . . .	379
12.1.1.3. Authenticity through adherence to religion . . . . .	384
12.1.2. Could we transmit the character of ‘authentic’ houses to make societies aware of their meanings and significance? . . . . .	387
12.2. Could we produce a house today that resonates with the Hedjāzī tradition by using modern means? . . . . .	392
 <b>CHAPTER THIRTEEN</b>	
<b>FINAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION . . . . .</b>	<b>397</b>
 <b>APPENDIX A</b>	
<b>ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF INTERVIEWS . . . . .</b>	<b>401</b>
 <b>GLOSSARY OF ARABIC WORDS AND MEANINGS . . . . .</b>	<b>407</b>
 <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .</b>	<b>427</b>



## LIST OF FIGURES

---

fig. 1.1. Ḥedjāz and Arabia. . . . .	8
fig. 1.2. The land of Ḥedjāz. . . . .	9
fig. 1.3. Climatic zones. . . . .	13
fig. 1.4. Natural vegetation. . . . .	14
fig. 1.5. Plan of Makkah in 1940. . . . .	15
fig. 1.6. Plan of Jeddah in 1938. . . . .	17
fig. 1.7. Plan of Al-Madinah in 1940. . . . .	19
fig. 1.8. The Ottoman Empire. . . . .	20
fig. 1.9. The world of men and the world of women. . . . .	29
fig. 2.1. The Kingdom's socio-economic dilemma of the 1970s. . . . .	40
fig. 2.2. Basis of traditional and modern institutions. . . . .	46
fig. 2.3. Fragmentation of the traditional unity of life. . . . .	47
fig. 3.1. Layout of Middle Eastern towns under the Ottomans. . . . .	50
fig. 3.2. A typical layout of a Ḥedjāzī ḥāra . . . . .	52
fig. 3.3. <i>al-Shukkoll'ushash</i> in front of a <i>sarāiyah</i> . . . . .	57
fig. 3.4. The main parts of the house. . . . .	59
fig. 3.5. <i>al-Madkhal</i> . . . . .	61
fig. 3.6. <i>al-Dihlīz</i> . . . . .	61
fig. 3.7. <i>al-Daradj</i> . . . . .	61
fig. 3.8. <i>al-Maq'ad</i> . . . . .	62
fig. 3.9. The alcove of the <i>rawāshīn</i> . . . . .	63
fig. 3.10. Adjustable blinds or shutters. . . . .	65
fig. 3.11. <i>al-Madjlis</i> . . . . .	67
fig. 3.12. Wooden <i>dikkāk</i> form the perimeter of the room . . . . .	67
fig. 3.13. <i>al-Mu'akhkhar</i> . . . . .	68
fig. 3.14. <i>al-Ṣuffah</i> . . . . .	68
fig. 3.15. <i>al-Makhzan</i> . . . . .	69
fig. 3.16. <i>Bait al-Mā</i> . . . . .	69
fig. 3.17. Water-containers ( <i>ḥanafiyyāt</i> ) . . . . .	70
fig. 3.18. <i>al-Murakkab</i> . . . . .	70

fig. 3.19. <i>al-Mabīt</i> . . . . .	71
fig. 3.20. <i>al-Khārdjah</i> . . . . .	71
fig. 3.21. A combination of geometric and floral motifs. . . . .	73
fig. 3.22. <i>Dīwān</i> and <i>minwar</i> . . . . .	75
fig. 3.23. <i>Qā'ah</i> and <i>bāzāhandj</i> . . . . .	75
fig. 3.24. Small houses from the island of Sawakin. . . . .	77
fig. 3.25. Elevations of the house. . . . .	77
fig. 3.26. Spaces were arranged from the most public to the most private. . . .	79
fig. 3.27a. Corridors working as buffer-zones. . . . .	79
fig. 3A. Common characteristics of traditional Ḥedjāzī house . . . . .	79a
fig. 3.27b. Changing levels of privacy . . . . .	80
fig. 3.28. Rooms were never approached directly. . . . .	80
fig. 3.29. The house was divided into two main parts: servant and served . . . .	81
fig. 3B. Contrasting Ḥedjāzī houses with those of other regions . . . . .	84a
fig. 3.30. <i>al-Merkaz</i> . . . . .	87
fig. 3.31. Each flight of stairs was concealed from the rest of the staircase. . . .	90
fig. 4.1. <i>Mu'allem</i> Karkāchin briefing the author during a site-visit . . . . .	106
fig. 4.2. <i>Mu'allem</i> Şaḍāqah Karachin. . . . .	107
fig. 4.3. The Shurbatī family house in Jeddah. . . . .	108
fig. 4.4. A surviving masterpiece: the Naşīf family house in Jeddah. . . . .	109
fig. 5.1. Structure and ranking of the building guild. . . . .	113
fig. 6.1. The ground for the prospective house. . . . .	123
fig. 6.2. Approaching the suitable <i>mu'allem</i> . . . . .	124
fig. 6.3. " <i>I do not have a complete image of what I am going to build...</i> " . . . .	125
fig. 6.4. The <i>mu'allem</i> drew the ground floor plan in the soil using his wooden stick during the client-builder preliminary meeting. . . . .	126
fig. 6.5. Al-Madinah qā'ah house. . . . .	127
fig. 6.6. <i>Dīwān Madīnī</i> (Al-Madinah style). . . . .	127
fig. 6.7. The accurate line of the development . . . . .	130
fig. 6.8. Foundation layout. . . . .	132
fig. 6.9. The result was a clear 'footprint' of the house on the ground. . . . .	134
fig. 6.10. Walls would be built up in rows of stones following the 'footprint' of the building. . . . .	135

fig. 6.11. Boards of Indian teak would be laid horizontally along the tops of the outside walls. . . . .	136
fig. 6.12. Floors construction near completion. . . . .	141
fig. 6.13. Ceiling and flooring detail. . . . .	143
fig. 6.14. <i>Liyāsāt al-bait</i> (plastering). . . . .	146
fig. 6.15. Nawwārā began to experiment with different forms. . . . .	148
fig. 6.16. The main parts of a Turkish <i>rowshān</i> . . . . .	151
fig. 6.17. <i>Rawāshīn</i> and <i>shīsh</i> installation (Egyptian type being fitted). . . . .	152
fig. 6.18. The house as presented to the client. . . . .	155
fig. 6.19. Severe settlement of the structure. . . . .	159
fig. 6.20. Details of the suspension technique. . . . .	161
fig. 6.21. Wooden inserts are left in the walls after restoration. . . . .	162
fig. 6.22. Partial suspension of the house . . . . .	163
fig. 6.23. A case of complete suspension . . . . .	165
fig. 7.1. The main purpose of man in the universe is to worship God. . . . .	168
fig. 7.2. The traditional Ḥedjāzī culture shifted that priority. . . . .	168
fig. 7.3. The idea of man standing alone in the universe was unthinkable. . . . .	169
fig. 7.4. Some building components which shared their names with those of the human body. . . . .	171
fig. 7.5. The traditional Ḥedjāzī house as a representation of the human body. . . . .	177
fig. 7.6. Inside-outside relationship. . . . .	190
fig. 7.7. Physical and social means of maintaining privacy and regulating social contacts. . . . .	191
fig. 7.8. In a traditional Ḥedjāzī house, the closer you are to the family, the deeper and higher you can go. . . . .	193
fig. 7.9. The principle of privacy in traditional Ḥedjāz. . . . .	194
fig. 7.10. Anyone sitting inside a <i>rowshān</i> would become fully invisible up to the waist-line and then covered with meshed-screen up to the head. . . . .	195
fig. 7.11. The word ‘ <i>ṭarīq</i> ’ had more than just the force of practical instruction. . . . .	200
fig. 8.1. Through incorporation we develop and gain a distinct sense of our home enveloping us with the tissues of our own bodies. . . . .	209
fig. 8.2. Components of the ‘internal world’ of home. . . . .	222

<b>fig. 8.3.</b> Components of the 'external world' of home. . . . .	223
<b>fig. 8.4.</b> Home-range, and the hierarchy of 'at homeness.' . . . .	243
<b>fig. 9.1.</b> <i>Mu'allemin's</i> ability to experience new ideas varied with the culturally-accepted matrix of the time. . . . .	275
<b>fig. 9.2.</b> The reciprocal relationship between <i>mu'allemin</i> and the society. . . .	277
<b>fig. 10.1.</b> Islam as the lifestyle of the traditional <i>Hedjāzīs</i> . . . . .	289
<b>fig. 10.2.</b> Almost every inch of the house was used throughout the day. . . . .	297
<b>fig. 10.3.</b> Houses in a <i>Hedjāzī ḥāra</i> were socially connected. . . . .	303
<b>fig. 10.4.</b> Each of these zones represented a territory to different genders and age-groups. . . . .	309
<b>fig. 10.5.</b> The deeper and higher inside the house, the more private it becomes. . . . .	312
<b>fig. 10.6.</b> " <i>Stones and baḥāh from the ground under your feet</i> ". . . . .	316
<b>fig. 11.1.</b> A culture lag took place in the beginning of the 1900s followed by a disintegration of the traditional culture and the emergence of a bond-free society. . . . .	329
<b>fig. 11.2.</b> The division between culture and religion in modern <i>Hedjāz</i> assisted in the social and physical disintegration of communities. . . . .	331
<b>fig. 11.3.</b> The modern notion of privacy has less distinction between the social status of visitors, while depending more on physical filters to regulate people's circulation. . . . .	336
<b>fig. 11.4.</b> The house seem haphazardly arranged until the system is understood and the code can be read. . . . .	337
<b>fig. 11.5.</b> Houses B, C, D, E, F, G, & H served as one reception area for house A in the traditional setting, while in the modern case, house A has to provide its own reception area within its walls. . . . .	346
<b>fig. 11.6.</b> Houses in a traditional neighbourhood were socially connected to the physical environment as well as to rest of the community. . . . .	347
<b>fig. 11.7.</b> The percentage of total private areas in respect to semi-private areas was larger in traditional houses than in those of today. . . . .	348
<b>fig. 11.8.</b> Public areas in modern settings, because they are not embodied with the house and its occupants, are becoming 'no-man' zones. . . . .	349
<b>fig. 11.9.</b> A modern house in Jeddah. . . . .	351

fig. 11.10. The perception of home as a part of one's self: now and then. . . . .	352
fig. 11.11. Visitors in modern Ḥedjāz are allowed to the deepest points in the house. . . . .	353
fig. 11.12. " <i>Stones and sand from under your feet...</i> " . . . . .	355
fig. 11.13. Because the <i>mu'alle</i> m unconsciously referred to the values of his community, the communication problems that modern architects face were not apparent. . . . .	357
fig. 12.1. Capital Hill/USA or Jeddah/Saudi Arabia? . . . . .	368
fig. 12.2a. Copying from classical orders that do not derive from the traditional Ḥedjāzī setting. . . . .	370
fig. 12.2b. The traditions of many regions are brought together in an eclectic assembly. . . . .	370
fig. 12.2c. . . . .	370
fig. 12.2d. . . . .	370
fig. 12.2e. Using the Post-Modern language. . . . .	370
fig. 12.2f. . . . .	371
fig. 12.3. The form of the original <i>rowshān</i> . . . . .	375
fig. 12.4. Imitation of a <i>rowshān</i> on a façade of a modern house. . . . .	376
fig. 12.5a. The residential compound of the Naṣīf family. . . . .	378
fig. 12.5b. The architectural features of the family house included <i>shukhsheikha</i> and <i>malqaff</i> (air and light inlets) which are typical of traditional Cairene houses. . . . .	378
fig. 12.6. Traditional and modern factors involved in the process of producing a house. . . . .	392
fig. 12.7. A third hybrid process resulting from the use of both the traditional and modern processes to produce a culturally-authentic Ḥedjāzī house. . . . .	393
fig. 12.8. A governmental agency could inspect architectural authenticity. . . .	394

## LIST OF TABLES

---

<b>Table 9.T1.</b> Traditional evaluation terminology . . . . .	282
<b>Table 10.T1.</b> Constants and variables of the traditional Hedjāzī house . . . . .	322
<b>Table 11.T1.</b> A contrast between traditional and modern socio-cultural attitudes . . . . .	363
<b>Table 14.T1.</b> Dates and locations of interviews . . . . .	406

## SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

---

Arabic Letter	Transliteration	Short Vowels
ا	'	َ — a
ب	b	ُ — u
ت	t	
ث	th	
ج	j	ِ — i
ح	h	
خ	kh	
د	d	
ذ	z	
ر	r	
ز	z	
س	s	
ش	sh	
ص	s	
ض	d	
ط	t	
ظ	d	
ع		
غ	gh	
ف	f	
ق	q	
ك	k	
ل	l	
م	m	
ن	n	
و	w	
ه	h	
ة	t	
ي	y	

### Long Vowels

آ ā

ؤ ū

ى ī

### Diphthongs

وَ - aw

يْ - ay

يَ - iyy

وْ - ww

The System of transliteration from Arabic is adopted from Bulletin 49 (November 1958) issued by the cataloging service of the Library of Congress.

# INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

---

The basic problem for Ḥedjāzī domestic architecture started with the relaxation of time-honoured socio-cultural values and norms soon after the oil boom of the middle 1900s. This was accompanied by growing pressures of acculturation, and the introduction of new lifestyles offered by the world's cultures seeking a part in the development of Saudi Arabia. Feeling that they are missing out on developments elsewhere, the majority of modern Ḥedjāzīs have sought a complete change, neglecting many of their traditional cultural values and religious beliefs, and adopting non-indigenous lifestyles. These new ways of life found their clearest manifestation in the architecture of modern Ḥedjāzī houses. These do not reflect the culture of the region, its people or its builders, but rather are an exhibition of architectural forms having no relation to their local context.

One reason for carrying out this research was this observable fragmentation of house architecture in modern Ḥedjāz. In order to understand better the situation in the this region of Arabia, it is necessary to gain a clear view of the nature of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house. This requires the house to be perceived as a whole system whose meaning is understood through its form, function, material, construction process and ornamentation, as a cultural object that embodies religion, society, psychology, cosmology and politics, and as an architectural system which is integrally identified by human activity, experience and expression.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study has been to gain a deeper understanding of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house and the architectural process associated with it than is currently available. This has been achieved by interviewing traditional architects and families whose statements not only provided historical accounts of the traditional process of designing and building a house, but also exposed socio-cultural attitudes which led to the notion of the house as much more than a physical construction. Based on this knowledge, the research focuses on the study of the meanings that the traditional builders and occupants of houses conveyed through their buildings. The subject matter of this undertaking is not the works of architecture as much as the interpretations which people invested in them.

The outcome of this leads to new ways of looking at the social environment, the loss of religious certainty and the resulting cultural alienation that have contributed to the state of architectural confusion in the Ḥedjāz region, which is represented mainly by houses that tend to replicate the outer forms of foreign and local traditions, copying modern Western models, or make a combination of possible 'styles.' This raises the question of cultural authenticity and the possible means of rectifying the current loss of a unifying cultural identity. If an architect today should attempt to duplicate a traditional house in one of the major Ḥedjāzī cities - following all the details of plans, sections and elevations - the product would not be the same as the original house. It would be missing what it took to make the traditional house what it was; family life, principal beliefs, myths...etc. Authentic architecture does not thrive upon imitation, but upon a deeply felt reciprocation of time, place and people. Such an understanding of the past might suggest possible means of producing culturally-representative houses in today's Ḥedjāz, or that the problem might have no solution.

The thesis is divided into three main parts. The first part is introductory: background on the study region is provided at a number of levels, from general context to specific historical data about the traditional house. This is based on historical evidence about the time and place of concern to the research. The second part is based on the evidence provided by the interviews with traditional architects who had firsthand experience of the various aspects of the region's natural, physical and social environments. Combining the data gathered from these two approaches, the third part considers the problem of reconnecting the past with the present and maintaining the culture and architectural traditions of the region given today's societal changes, foreign acculturation and technology. These three parts are divided into thirteen chapters as follows:

Chapter one introduces the region of Ḥedjāz and the social characteristics that influenced the production of domestic architecture. It deals with the physical, natural and socio-cultural environments in which the house developed. Chapter two provides a brief account of the factors (social, economical and political) that led to the breakdown of the traditional society. It is meant to familiarize the reader with the circumstances that surrounded the production of the house from the middle 1900s until today, while the main analysis of cultural change is presented in chapter eleven. Chapter three presents an analysis of the basic components of the Ḥedjāzī house. The layout of the houses of three major cities of the region (Makkah, Jeddah and Al-

Madinah) are compared in order to establish their common characteristics. The main features of these houses are contrasted with those of neighbouring regions to illustrate the impact of non-native architectural influence on the traditional Ḥedjāzī houses.

Chapter four introduces the methodology of utilizing the knowledge of traditional master-builders derived from interviews to understand past architectural traditions, ways of life, beliefs and socio-cultural organizations. A number of interviews were conducted with traditional *mu'allemin* (master-builders) and old families in the spring of 1990 around the major cities of Ḥedjāz. Most of these interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The heads of the guild of master-builders in traditional Ḥedjāz are introduced.

Chapter five describes the structure and organization of the building guild as an introduction to the following chapters which are almost entirely based on the data gathered from the interviews with the *mu'allemin*. Chapter six presents a reconstruction of the process of producing the traditional house of Ḥedjāz from the perspective of those who built them, lived in them or were contemporary to the process of their production. Chapter seven provides an insight into the traditional perceptions of 'home,': how it represented people's psychological investment in it, what happens when it is lost or not represented, and what are the psychological responses to the dwelling? It presents the traditional Ḥedjāzī perception of the house as a miniature cosmos, and as a totality of natural and physical environments, community and family. The chapter also examines religious and socio-cultural rituals associated with the construction and use of the traditional house as these were commonly practised in Ḥedjāz. Finally, it contains the analysis of the mechanisms of privacy and social interaction and the relation of these variables to family life (e.g., friendship patterns, communication, interaction and social relations, gender roles).

In chapter eight an attempt is made to establish the definition of a 'good' living environment from the point of view of traditional Ḥedjāzīes through the examination of the temporal and spiritual qualities of home. The notion and role of home in the development of familial relationships, in relation to the neighbourhood, community and the entire region is investigated. This shows that the traditional houses of Ḥedjāz not only supported and sustained familial and cultural relationships, but also simultaneously represented them.

In chapter nine the factors that contributed to the emergence of the particular architectural 'styles' of the Ḥedjāzī house are identified. The extent of the influence of social and physical determinants upon the resulting form and their limitations upon novelty are discussed. For these purposes, the data contained in chapters six, seven and eight are brought together and a more detailed look is taken at the *mu'allemin's* perception of the house and their role in producing it. The main part of the chapter is an examination of the variable elements that influenced the design criteria within which the traditional *mu'allemin* of Ḥedjāz operated. This reveals the areas in which the *mu'allemin* were able to put their ideas into practice with freedom, and those areas where they were restricted.

In chapter ten an analysis is made of which aspects of traditional Ḥedjāzī culture and domestic architecture were constant, or changed very slowly, and which varied and in what ways. Components of the 'culturally-accepted matrix' are examined. Once this matrix was manifested in the house and merged with the particularities of each family and each individual, houses began to gain distinctive characteristics from one locality to the other. The analysis of preferences and constraints (either socio-cultural or physical) answers the vital question of how far a traditional house could be changed without ceasing to be traditional. These constraints are not analyzed from an architectural point of view, but rather as a set of prerequisites for the emergence of a traditional Ḥedjāzī house without which the traditional Ḥedjāzīs would not have perceived it as a 'home.'

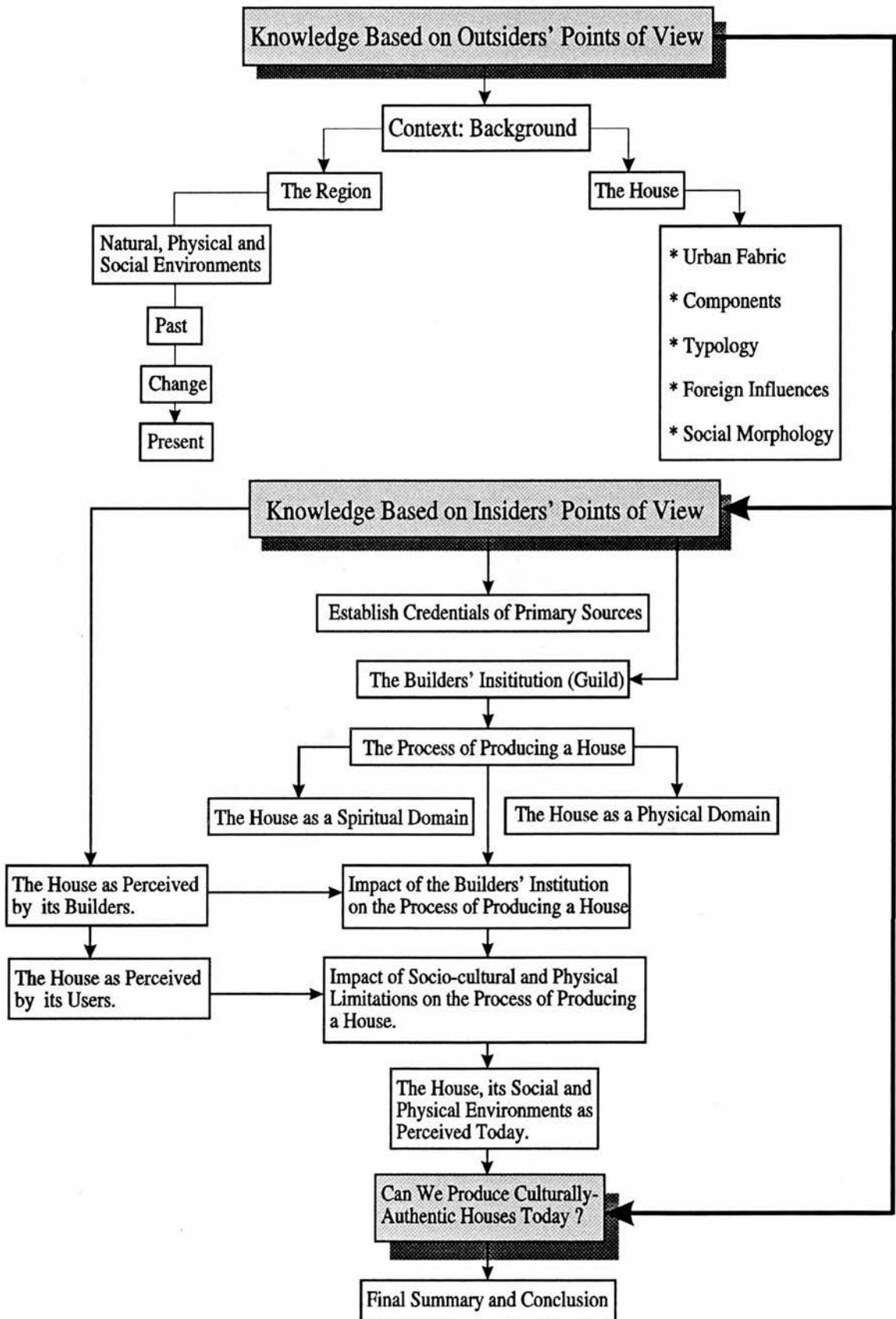
Chapter eleven deals with the conflicts that arise when traditional lifestyles and ways of building come into contact with forces of change and modernization. It examines how the use and meaning of the 'home' has changed over time, both across generations and within a single generation of users. It also considers both change and continuity and describes what aspects of homes have or have not been affected by rapid alienation. The chapter deals with issues such as the competence of modern Ḥedjāzī architects to maintain the same balance of continuity and change that the traditional *mu'allemin* mastered through time, and the ability and willingness of today's society to perceive its houses in the light of yesterday's realisation.

Chapter twelve raises the notions of authenticity, imitation and innovation in house design by contrasting the traditional architectural values discussed in the early

chapters with those of the modern Ḥedjāzī society. It is mainly concerned with the ways architectural forms are handled in modern Ḥedjāzī houses. This is not a direct comparison between the traditional form-language of the region and the modern one, rather it is an attempt to find possible ways of benefiting from the art and architecture of the past without resorting to direct imitations or replication of traditional architectural vocabularies, endemic to today's architecture practice. The problem is a very complex one which perhaps has no solution.

Chapter thirteen revisits the main parts of the thesis, summarising what was learned from the interviews and the main conclusions derived from the study of the traditional house. It deals with the areas in which the author believes to be debatable from an academic point of view, and suggests possible directions for future analysis of the notion of 'home' as a universal phenomenon.

# Research Organization



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE LAND OF ḤEDJĀZ



# CHAPTER ONE

## THE LAND OF ḤEDJĀZ

---

### Introduction

The Ḥedjāz (Fig. 1.1.)<sup>1</sup>, or the western region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia<sup>2</sup> includes the port of Jeddah which is the main business centre of the Kingdom, Makkah and Al-Madinah which are the two holiest cities of Islam, Taif which is the summer resort of the Kingdom, and Yanbu which is the major petroleum and industrial complex, and the second most important seaport of Saudi Arabia. The focus in this research is mainly on Jeddah, Makkah and Al-Madinah for reasons of available documentation, and because most of the other Ḥedjāzī cities seem to have been influenced by the traditions of these cities.

The analysis covers two historical periods. The first starts around 1517 AD/923 AH (Anno Hijriah)<sup>3</sup> with the early presence of the Ottomans in Ḥedjāz, until 1920 AD/1338 AH, which marked the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the commencement of the rule of Al-Saud<sup>4</sup>. This period is essential for the study of two major foreign influences on the Ḥedjāz, namely the Turkish and Egyptian. Although the Ottoman era ended in 1920/1338 AH, its momentum and influence remained in Ḥedjāz until the 1960s (the first oil concession). Thus, the last traditional period before the great social change in Saudi Arabia can be seen as the natural continuation of the Ottoman period.

---

<sup>1</sup> Map source: Thomas, Bertram. The Arabs. London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1937. 295.

<sup>2</sup> Administratively, the Ḥedjāz area is referred to as the 'Western Region.' To the rest of the Muslim world, Ḥedjāz meant, and still means, 'the Holy Lands,' or 'the *ḥadj*' (pilgrimage).

<sup>3</sup> The *Hedjrīyyah* year is the Islamic calendar that began on 622 AD with the Prophet's flight from Makkah to Al-Madinah. It is based upon lunar cycles, thus the year is 354 days long.

<sup>4</sup> After 1517/923 AH, Sultan Selim I (reign 1512-1520/918-926 AH), conqueror of Egypt, spread his authority over Ḥedjāz and assumed the title of 'the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques.' Under Sultan Suliman the Magnificent (1520-1566/926-974 AH) and Selim II (1566-1574/974-983 AH), the whole region was established as a province of the Turkish Empire, and remained under Turkish/Egyptian influence until 1920/1338 AH. This was the period prior to the actual Ottoman rule over the entire Ḥedjāz, which was declared officially by Muhammad Ali, governor of Egypt, in 1840/1256 AH. See Mones, Hussain. Atlas of the History of Islam. Cairo: Al-Zahraa Arab Mass Media, 1987. 212-254; Robinson, Francis. Atlas of the Islamic World Since 1500. Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1987. 80-91.



The second period starts in 1930 AD/1348 AH, including the crisis of severe cultural change, ignited by the oil boom of the 1970s, which persists to the present time. This chapter is organized in a before-and-after comparison (1517-1930 & 1960-1992) so as to give an impression about Ḥedjāz during each period. The description of the traditional urban life of Ḥedjāz focuses on the period between 1900/1318 AH and 1960/1380 AH, during which there was a mature architectural tradition. The main reasons for this choice are that a number of surviving buildings from this period have been accurately documented, and the architectural work that this period yielded had identifiable characteristics reflecting a social pattern recognized today as being the prototypic image of the tradition of this area.



Fig. 1.1. Ḥedjāz and Arabia.

## 1.1. The physical environment

### 1.1.1. The natural environment

#### 1.1.1.1. Geography

Ḥedjāz, which may be translated as boundary or barrier, is so called because its barren country stands like a barrier between Tihāmah (the lowlands) and Najd (the up-lands). According to Al-Farsy<sup>5</sup>, the region consists of a 1130 km coastal plain lying along the Red Sea, reaching from the southern side of 'Asīr region to the

<sup>5</sup> Al-Farsy, Fouad. Saudi Arabia: A Case Study in Development. London: KPI, 1986. 7-194.

entrance of the Gulf of Aqaba<sup>6</sup>. This plain extends to a massive mountain wall of igneous rocks on its eastern edge. The range of mountains, running parallel to the western coast, forms the backbone of the peninsula. Wādī Faṭmah transects the mountain chain in its trail through Jeddah to the sea, thus facilitating the link between Jeddah and Makkah - since it is the only gap through the mountain range to the barren valley<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 1.2.).

Lack of water, steep mountains, lava fields, sand seas and salt-marshes have made large parts of Ḥedjāz either totally unsuitable for human use, or capable of exploitation only at infrequent intervals of time. According to Beaumart, the weak soil conditions hindered the possibility of building on vast tracts of flatland which were mostly avoided by people



Fig. 1.2. The land of Ḥedjāz.

building their dwellings<sup>8</sup>. Rutter, who visited Arabia in the middle 1900s, noted that mountain sides and apexes, and occasionally rugged mountain slopes, were common building sites<sup>9</sup>. This was especially true for Makkah because of people's desire to live in close proximity to the Holy Mosque, which led to the vertical expansion of houses on either steep mountain slopes or flatland<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> See Figure (1.2.) modified from a poster by Thompson, Don. The Arabian Peninsula. [n.p./n.d.].

<sup>7</sup> See Fisher, W.B. The Middle East: A Physical, Social and Regional Geography. London: Methun & Co., Ltd., 1978. 165-469.

<sup>8</sup> Beaumart, P., G. Blake and Malcom Wagstaff. The Middle East: A Geographical Study. London: John Wiley and Sons, 1976. 7-327.

<sup>9</sup> Rutter, Eldon. The Holy Cities of Arabia. 2 vols. New York: G.P. Putman's, 1930. *Passim*.

<sup>10</sup> Faden, Yousef. Traditional Houses of Makkah: The Influence of Socio-Cultural Themes upon Arab-Muslim Dwellings. Proceedings of the Symposium on Islamic Architecture and Urbanism. Ed. Aydin Germen. Dammam, Saudi Arabia: King Faisal University, 5-10 January, 1980. 295-326.

Travelling historians like Wavell<sup>11</sup> and Hitti<sup>12</sup>, both of whom visited Arabia in the early part of the nineteenth century, noted that towns and cities in Ḥedjāz were built in areas where water was available, in the form of stored rainwater or surface and subterranean flow, and where physical conditions in general combined to produce a potential resource like trade routes, periodic grazing, cultivable land or fisheries.

Accordingly, the urban settlements of Ḥedjāz could be categorized into two main groups: 1)- Coastal settlements such as the ports of Jeddah and Yanbu, 2)- inland settlements which could also be divided into three sub-groups, either being surrounded by mountains such as in Makkah, or on mountains like in Taif, or in plains of proximity to mountains such as in Al-Madinah. These settlements had different means of supporting their inhabitants besides their geographical locations, which are discussed later in this chapter.

Rihani and Zwemer<sup>13</sup>, who visited the region in the late 1800s, noted that the presence of the Holy Cities as religious centres made the region the site of enormous trading activities at the time. These cities have remained centres of attention and their economy has benefited increasingly from the annual pilgrimage season. This season has had other bearings on the general characteristics of Ḥedjāz, both culturally and politically. The passage of pilgrims was and still is an occasion of much trade and cultural interchange. Some of the pilgrims settled in Ḥedjāz as early as the first century AD, and started trading with their former homes, while establishing their new ways of life among Ḥedjāzīes. Serving the pilgrims was not only the major economic activity, but was also a reason of many political struggles to control Ḥedjāz. Market towns, like Yanbu, developed where the trade routes met; and these together with the coastal strip provided links between Ḥedjāz and the outside world.

Today, Ḥedjāz represents the second major region of Saudi Arabia and the most known province of the Kingdom for its historical background and contact with

---

<sup>11</sup> Wavell, A. J. B. A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca. London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1912. 54-179.

<sup>12</sup> Hitti, Philip. The History of the Arabs. London: Mcmillan and Co. Ltd., 1937. 14-113.

<sup>13</sup> Rihani, Ameen. Around the Coast of Arabia. London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1930, *passim*; Zwemer, Rev. S.M. Arabia: The Cradle of Islam. New York: Caxton Press, 1900. 17-419. Also see Lackner, Helen. A Political Economy of Saudi Arabia. London: Ithaca Press, 1978. ii-217.

remote cultures of the world<sup>14</sup>, and it is still as important to the Muslim world as it has been since the message of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon Him) in 610 AD. Its current image in the Kingdom is that of an assembly point of different cultures and the initiator of novel lifestyles. So much of the economy of the Ḥedjāz still depends upon the location of the Holy Cities and the pilgrimage season trade. Today, much of the layout of its cities is being altered to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims and other associated services. Coastal cities like Jeddah and Yanbu, though they have ceased to be fully dependent on the *ḥadj* (pilgrimage) season - due to their current economic bases, Jeddah: commercial, Yanbu: petrochemical - are gaining from their geographical locations as major ports and centres of industry. Most, if not all, of their business continues to flourish because of their coastal location.

#### 1.1.1.2. Geology

There are no permanent rivers in the peninsula and none of its mountain streams reach the sea coast. Kay, Shirley and Basil<sup>15</sup>, in their study of the history of the region in 1976, stated that wells and occasional springs were the main source of water before the development of dams and cisterns in the 1970s. Large springs developed sometimes into oases where people were able to settle permanently and live off agriculture. In his study of the natural resources of the region, Twitchell<sup>16</sup> notes that the great wadis of the region are its main characteristic features. Some of the large ones, near Yanbu and Jeddah, supported a great deal of cultivation and, hence, considerable hamlets. Valley beds flowed from Ḥedjāz across the peninsula for nearly 1288 km in a northwesterly direction towards the Euphrates River, and for obvious reasons the caravan routes of the pilgrims generally followed the course of such valleys. Towns followed the pattern of these water beds, and as mentioned earlier, most Ḥedjāzī towns were located along them.

---

<sup>14</sup> The first being *Najd*, a high country in the heart of the kingdom, and then Ḥedjāz which lies along the Red Sea Coast. The region of *ʿAsīr*, in the southern Red Sea-Yemen border area, constitute the third region. Finally, there is *Al-Ḥasā*, the sandy and stormy eastern part of Arabia, and the richest of all regions in petroleum. (Al-Farsy 1986).

<sup>15</sup> Kay, Shirley and Malin Basil. Saudi Arabia Past and Present. London: Namara Publications, 1979. 23-147.

<sup>16</sup> Twitchell, K.S. Saudi Arabia: With An Account of the Development of its Natural Resources. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958. 4-28.

Besides providing the potentials of supporting fishing hamlets and maritime trade, the Red Sea also provided the main building material for the sea-shore houses in Jeddah and Yanbu, and even some of the inland towns like Makkah. This peculiar building material was the dead coral rag which lined the shore. This limestone was dug or cut from the shore and its local name (*ḥadjar manqabī* or *kāshūr* = stone dug or cut from the sea-bed) was derived from this fact.

Beaumart states that the soil formation of the region consists of a foundation stock of plutonic (igneous) rock whereon lies sandstone and above that is a layer of limestone. Makkah, Al-Madinah and Taif have rocky soil formations and the other parts of Ḥedjāz, like Jeddah and Yanbu, have sand and loam. The records of the buildings of the traditional period under study (1517-1960/923-1380 AH) show between three and five floors in these two parts of Ḥedjāz (this is an indication that there was no major problems as far as foundations were concerned). Incidence of 'sinking' houses at the town of Jeddah were narrated by travellers due to differential settlement in the soil foundation as discussed in chapter six.

Such soil conditions are now causing serious problems for today's structural and soil engineers in the cities of Ḥedjāz, mostly where saline soil occurs (i.e., in Jeddah and Yanbu where the water-table is continuous on an average depth of 1.3 meters). Water-bearing soils are accountable for a number of structural failures in many cities. A very large portion of the budget of most projects in Jeddah for example, is now being devoted to the construction of huge raft or pile foundations and isolating techniques (depending on the soil conditions and the general slope of the site). With the swift expansion of these cities and the unavailability of building sites in areas of propensity, people are obliged to build in defective soil conditions and proceed with immense expense to complete their projects (a phenomenon that added to the rocketing land prices of 1975 in the city of Jeddah).

#### 1.1.1.3. Climate

Climatically, the area of Ḥedjāz is particularly inhospitable, being extremely hot and humid. The summer climate along the sea-coast is hot and damp. Average day temperatures are normally above 38°C. Before the introduction of air-cooling systems in the middle 1900s, the Ḥedjāzīes had to endure an external temperature near that of

the human body, associated with high humidity and high levels of radiation unmitigated by clouds. Such conditions must have made the fierce summer heat of Ḥedjāzī cities a major concern of both builders and clients.

Rainwater is relatively low throughout Ḥedjāz - except at Taif and in the extreme south where there are enough seasonal rains. In the upper parts of the sea-slope (including Makkah) precipitation occurs, both in winter and occasionally in summer during brief thunderstorms. Around the coast line of the Red Sea, the average annual rainfall never exceeds 13 cm, and these occur in 10 to 30 days only.

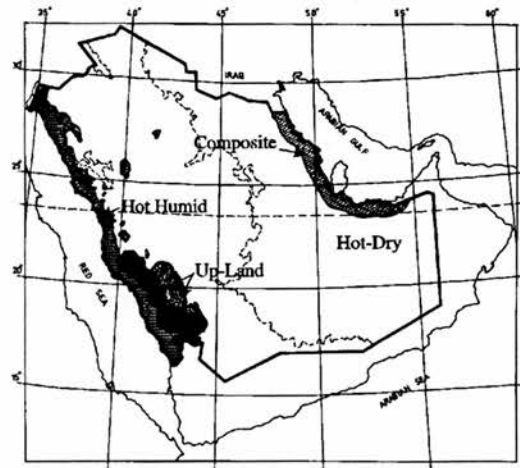


Fig. 1.3. Climatic zones (Talib, 1984. 136).

Ḥedjāz is, climatically, divided into three zones (Talib)<sup>17</sup> that contributes to the identity of the houses built in each zone (Fig 1.3.): **1) Hot-humid zone** (Jeddah and Yanbu), with an average day temperature of 42°C during summer and 15°C in winter (average rainfall = 12 cm / relative humidity throughout the year is up to 85%). **2) Hot-dry zone** (Makkah and Al-Madinah), which is characterized by an average daily temperature of 43°C in summer. Relative humidity averages about 50% throughout winter and decreases to an average of 16% through the rest of the year (average annual rainfall = 60 mm). **3) Upland zone** (Taif) is characterized by an average day temperature of 24°C in summer and 10°C in winter (average rainfall = 30 cm). Relative humidity is moderate, but reaches up to 80% during the rainy days.

#### 1.1.1.4. Vegetation

Ḥedjāz is generally arid except in a few areas near Taif, Yanbu and Al-Madinah. Its extremely arid climate and alkaline soils pose special problems to vegetation (Fig. 1.4.). The soil is predominantly sandy and calcareous, containing soluble salts of various amounts. The principal physical characteristics of Ḥedjāz are

<sup>17</sup> Talib, Kaizer. Shelter in Saudi Arabia. London: Academy Press, 1984. 17-116.



general barrenness, vast areas of *sabakhāt* (*n.sing. sabakhah* = saline soil), bare and self-encrusted zones, relieved by rare planted oases with palm groves. Throughout, Ḥedjāz is dominated by dusty sand, coralline rocks, *ḥarrāt* (*n.sing. ḥarrah* = lava) or naked rock. Rare fertility exists only at the bottoms of wadies. Hence, traditional towns of Ḥedjāz depended for much of their livelihood on food supplied by travelling caravans.

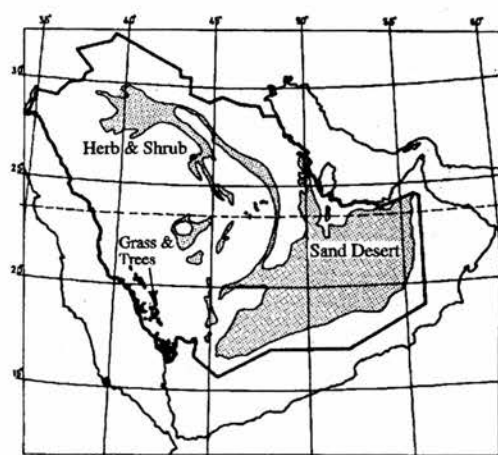


Fig. 1.4. Natural vegetation (Talib, 134).

Where cultivation is possible, dates, millet, wheat, barley, dum-palm, *nabq* tree (*nabk*; *Lotus Jujube*), henna, and tamarinds are grown. With the exception of the date-palms, the largest trunks amongst these trees is no thicker than a man's arm and thus unfit as building materials and suitable for fire-wood only. That is why the date-palms (trunks and fronds) were the sole local building material throughout Ḥedjāz before the introduction of other ones in the late 1800s. Cities of Ḥedjāz had to import a large amount of building timber such as teak, mahogany, sisam and other types mainly from India, the Fertile Crescent, North Africa, Java, Burma, East Africa and Southern Europe. Burckhardt<sup>18</sup>, who visited Ḥedjāz in 1814 AD/1230 AH, observed that lack of timber hindered even ship building in Jeddah<sup>19</sup>.

### 1.1.2. The built environment

Most Western travellers to Ḥedjāz were able to give a good account of the towns of the Red Sea (e.g., Jeddah), but only few were able to enter the Holy Cities, hence, their description of the built environment of the region was somewhat lacking.

<sup>18</sup> Burckhardt, John Lewis. *Travels in Arabia*. 1968 ed. Cambridge: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., (first published in 1829). *Passim*.

<sup>19</sup> Imported building material like quality wood was beyond the reach of the lower income groups of the society who relied on a variety of other fragile materials for the construction of their dwellings (e.g., mud supported with palm fronds). As discussed in chapter six, these dwellings were called *'ushash* locally (*n.sing. 'ushah*). No traces of such dwellings are left today for a detailed study of this housing type.

The following is a brief description of the physical and social environments of the major cities of Ḥedjāz based on those made by different foreign travellers to the area between the periods of 1800/1215 AH and about 1960/1377 AH<sup>20</sup>.

### 1.1.2.1. Makkah

Makkah today is inhabited by a mixture of Arabs and Muslims from around the globe who had settled there. Many of them are of Egyptian, Yemeni, Turkish, Syrian and Bokharan origin. Historically, they were involved in trade in the first place, and other activities associated with pilgrims' services. In the Holy Mosque, they were *muṭawifīn* (guides), *saqqāiyyīn* (water-carriers) and *ḥammālīn* (porters). Makkah was famous for its artisans, masons, carpenters and smiths, yet according to Burckhardt, they were inferior in their skill to those of Egypt.

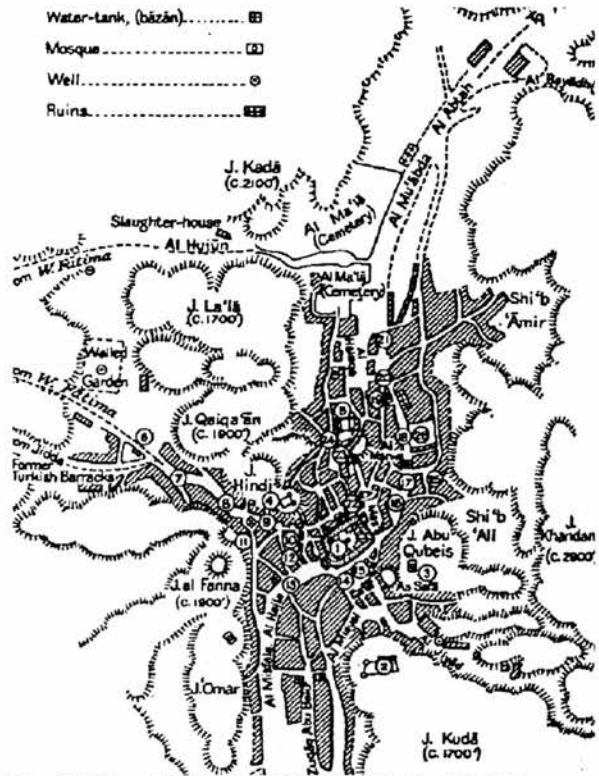


Fig. 1.5. Plan of Makkah in 1940 (British Naval Intelligence, 1946: 558).

The town of Makkah was described by many travellers as 'handsome.' Streets were generally broader than those of other Ḥedjāzī towns and sloped in the direction of the *ka'bah* in the valley-bed so that it was almost surrounded on every side by houses and fence-walls. The traditional Makkan house was built of dark stone with

<sup>20</sup> These descriptions are composed from the reports by: Burckhardt (1829); Wellstead (1838); Wallin (1840); Burton (1855); Hurgronje (1885); Wavell (1888); Zwemer (1900); Hitti (1931); Fisher (1950); Twitchell (1958); Hogarth (1978). Also see: Hurgronje, C. Snouck. *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*. Trans. J. H. Monahan. London: Luzac & Co., 1931. (First published in 1885); Doughty, C.M. *Arabia Deserta*. Cambridge: [n.p]. 1937. (First published 1888). Wavell, A.J.B. *A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca*. London: Constable & Co., Ltd, 1912; Philby, John H. *The Heart of Arabia*. 2 vols. London: Constable and Co., 1922. -----, *A Pilgrimage in Arabia*. London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1946. -----, *Arabian Highlands*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1952.



numerous windows facing the street, and was generally lofty to accommodate as many pilgrims as possible. Burckhardt thought that such houses were somewhat more lively and European-like than those of Egypt and Syria, where houses did not have as many windows towards the street. Each traditional house had its own terrace which was visually-screened by parapet walls for the use of the female residents.

According to the Begum of Bhopal (a visitor to Makkah in 1864/1284 AH), "the foundations and walls of the buildings in Mecca are very strong, being composed of either bricks and mortar or stone; but the roofs and flooring are roughly constructed after this fashion: branches of the date-palm are laid cross-wise over the beams and rafters, and over them is spread a layer of earth." She also mentioned that houses were as high as four floors, and were lower in height than those of Jeddah where "houses [were] without courtyards, and [were] built in flats or stories, capable of being added to at pleasure; no house [had] fewer than three stories, nor any more than seven."<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, not all multi-story houses were owned by individual landlords but were rather complex-houses for the accommodation of *ḥudjāj* (pilgrims). They were divided into many flats, separated from each other, and each consisted of a small room and a kitchen. Surviving models show that several tenants occupied this type of building which is discussed in chapter three.

An interesting description by Burckhardt of a religious factor that prevented the building of any grand structure in Makkah (which appeared later to be also respected by the Ottomans) is that other than the large houses of the *sharīf* (*n.pl. ashraf*)<sup>22</sup>, the Makkans did not attempt to construct any building of architectural splendour. He goes on to say that the reason was that people did not dare to construct an 'earthly' structure which might diminish the prevailing holiness of the Grand Mosque. Instead, each sultan or *wālī* (*n.pl. wulāt*)<sup>23</sup> was keen to improve the Grand

---

<sup>21</sup> The Nawab Sikandar, Begum of Bhopal, G.C.S.I., *A Pilgrimage to Mecca*. Trans. Willoughby-Osborne. Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co., 1906. 29-65. refer to chapter six for more details of her accounts.

<sup>22</sup> *Sharīf/Saiyyed*, literally meaning honourable or distinguished, for being descendants of the Prophet by Fāṭimah, his daughter. *Ashraf* are descendants of Ḥasan, the son of 'Alī, the Prophet's nephew. *Al-Sādah* (*n.sing = saiyyed*) are descendants of Ḥussain, the brother of Ḥasan. They are natives of Makkah. Although there were other foreign *ashraf* (i.e., Turkish), but the *sharīf* class of Makkah does not admit non-natives as being less 'authentic.' The social difference between *ashraf* and *sādah* is that a *sharīf* is a soldier while a *saiyyed* is a follower of religion.

<sup>23</sup> A *wālī* was a governor of a district in the Ottoman regime.

Mosque by renewing its structure - especially the *Ka'ba*<sup>24</sup> - or by adding an impressive wing/s to it. In this way, they guaranteed the gratefulness of the locals and the appreciation of entire Muslim World<sup>25</sup>.

Makkah is still the most prominent host of the pilgrimage season, providing the same type of services to pilgrims of the Holy Mosque. The numbers of pilgrims arriving every year is increasing, as does the volume of the trade involved. Interchange with other areas of the Kingdom is also developing as an important source of income to the city along with a host of different jobs provided by the government.

### 1.1.2.2. Jeddah

Jeddah started as a fishing hamlet, but its proximity to Makkah made it the chief port of debarkation and embarkation of pilgrims. Many of the inhabitants of Jeddah, like those of Makkah and Al-Madinah, are of foreign origin (from Egypt and Syria mainly, and the rest of the Muslim world). The other season of prosperity in Jeddah came with the seasonal winds which drove boats from the shores of India carrying products to be stored in Jeddah before being transported to the Island of Sawakin (opposite coast of the Red Sea) prior to their re-export to the Mediterranean ports - or being carried by the caravans to the

Levant (the Fertile Crescent) markets to the north. Accordingly, people in Jeddah were entirely engaged in commerce, and were not involved in any manufacturing but that

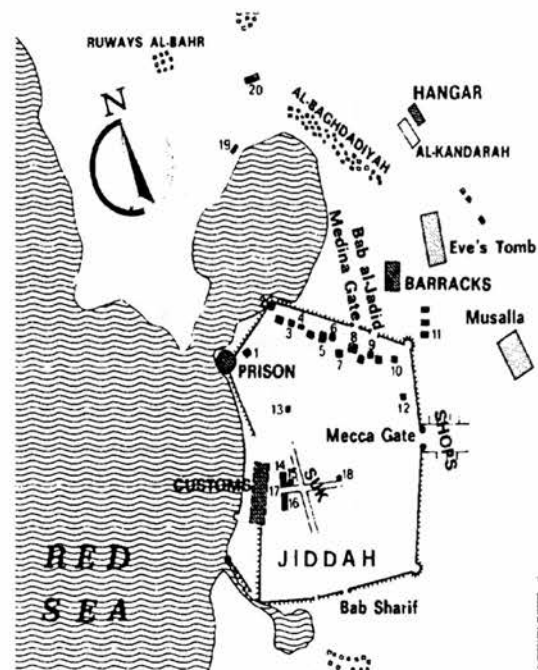


Fig. 1.6. Plan of Jeddah in 1938 (Pesce, 1976. 107).

<sup>24</sup> The *Ka'bah* was the objective of preservation of every ruler in the area as a symbol of good faith.

<sup>25</sup> In the 16th century, Sultan Selim II made the largest addition to the Holy Mosque, which was preserved until the consecutive reconstructions of Al-Saud. See: Michell, George. Architecture of the Islamic World. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978. 209-210.

of explicit necessity. According to Burckhardt, they were all either sea-faring people, traders, or like those of Makkah, living by serving pilgrims, and when the traffic was intense and pilgrims were prosperous they grew rich enough to go to Makkah, and set up large trading establishments. They worked as hotel-keepers, guides, money-changers and lenders, shopkeepers, brokers, soldiers, and other jobs connected with the annual transfer of caravans of pilgrim from the coast inland.

The image of the town was that of a well-built place, compared with other Turkish towns of equal size, with spacious and airy streets. It was surrounded by a wall of coralline rock faced with mud brick. Burckhardt described the common houses of Jeddah, during his stay in the city in 1814, especially those in the proximity of the external walls as:

huts formed of reeds, rushes, and brushwood, and en-circling the inner town, which consists of stone buildings. The huts were chiefly inhabited by bedouins, or poor peasants and labourers, who live completely after the bedouin fashion. Similar quarters for people of this description may be found in every town of Arabia<sup>26</sup>.

Burckhardt went on to describe the coral-block buildings of Jeddah as lofty houses constructed of stone, brought from the sea-shore or the Manqabah lagoon. Almost every house had more than two stories<sup>27</sup>, with large screened windows divided into many small wooden shutters. These houses presented a distinguished diversity of artistic work produced by carpenters and craftsmen. The houses that still survive today belonged to the rich merchants of the town. However, the foundations of some of these houses seem to have been in a bad condition and were liable to collapse, according to the British Naval Intelligence report<sup>28</sup>, partly because of the increasing salinity of the soil and because of the overloading of the, relatively fragile, load-bearing walls built of limestones.

Jeddah has since developed enormously, mainly as the principal port of Saudi Arabia, and by the 1970s it was one of the fastest growing cities in the world. Its

---

<sup>26</sup> Burckhardt, 1829. 8-10.

<sup>27</sup> Almost 50 years after Burckhardt's description (Jeddah houses rising two/three stories), the Begum of Bhopal described them in 1864 as being six or seven stories high. (Begum of Bhopal, 1906. 29).

<sup>28</sup> The Western Region and the Red Sea. British Naval Intelligence Publication Division, June, 1946. 2-365.

transformation from a fishing hamlet to a trade interchange and then to the main commercial centre of the Middle East, occurred at such a speed that it surpassed the expectations of many of the planning authorities. The city spread in every direction even on the seaward side. It also experienced a substantial social transformation reflecting the most eclectic urban and architectural evolution. This was a period of complete reliance on the simulation of architectural design and models that mostly disagreed with the general natural, physical and social environments of the past decade as discussed in chapters two, eleven and twelve.

### 1.1.2.3. Al-Madinah

A city of agriculturists, Al-Madinah was larger than Makkah, as it had a larger oasis and easier communication with the Fertile Crescent trade route (due to the Ḥedjāz-Damascus railway built in 1908/1326 AH). The economy of the town depended on the presence of the Prophet's grand mosque, as it is a popular part of the pilgrim's task to visit the Prophet's tomb and pray in the courtyard of his house. The profession of *muzawir* (a guide to the tombs of the Prophet, his wives, and his companions) emerged to aid pilgrims. Besides the plantation of dates, all classes in the town from the owner of houses to water carriers profited from the pilgrimage.

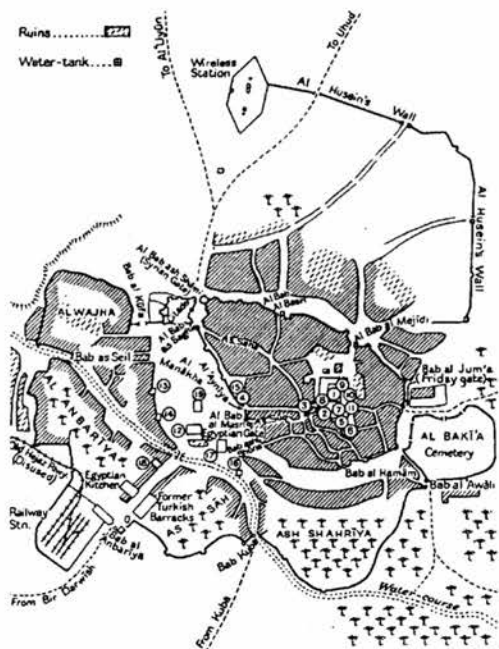


Fig. 1.7. Plan of Al-Madinah in 1940 (British Naval Intelligence. 562).

A walled town and the terminus of the Ḥedjāz railway, Al-Madinah consisted of three principal divisions<sup>29</sup>: the town centre, the fort and the suburbs. It was entirely built of stone, streets were narrow and unpaved, houses were flat-roofed and

<sup>29</sup> One distinctive urban feature of Al-Madinah is its division into national and religious sectors. This was done in accordance with the Ottoman planning principles that were carried throughout the Arab towns during their rule (it also featured a number of Turkish utilities like public baths which were not common in other towns of Ḥedjāz).

double-storied, built of granite or basalt and lava-blocks cemented with lime and not white-washed like those of Jeddah. Many of the larger mansions had pillared-halls opening on to bathing-pools. Towards the 19th century, examples of four and five story buildings emerged, with small gardens and wells behind them. The abundance of water for irrigation allowed for a feature of marble basins to emerge in the back of most houses. The greater part of the suburbs was occupied by one-story houses built around courtyards and separated from each other by plantations. These were inhabited by the lower income groups of the town (e.g., farmers). The merchants, as well as the *wālī* of Al-Madinah and a number of wealthy Turks, resided in the western side of the suburbs where paved streets and luxury private dwellings were to be seen.

## 1.2. The social environment

### 1.2.1. The political environment

Ḥedjāz was governed by the early caliphs until 980 AD, when it passed under the rule of the first *sharīf* Ja'far<sup>30</sup>. Life in Ḥedjāz in the early 18th century was much as it had been in previous centuries (trade and pilgrim services) until the Ottoman empire extended its wings to cover the whole area of Ḥedjāz (Fig. 1.8.)<sup>31</sup>. At that time (1517/923 AH), the Ottoman sultans of Turkey claimed the caliphate and the custody of the Holy Cities.

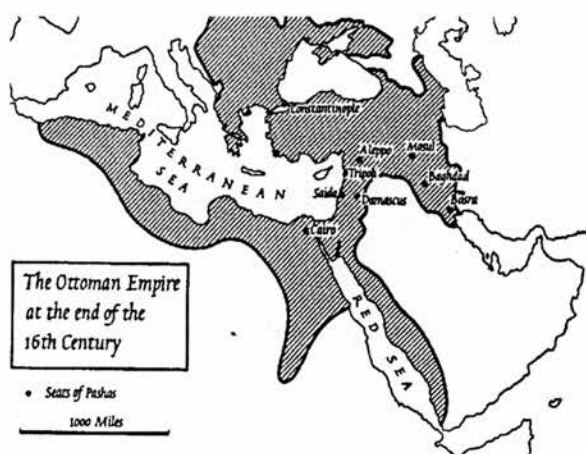


Fig. 1.8. The Ottoman Empire at the end of the 1500s.

Actual Ottoman rule was declared over the whole Ḥedjāz in 1840/1256 AH and in 1869/1285 AH, the whole Ottoman administrative system was introduced in the

<sup>30</sup> After the Ottoman conquest in Egypt (1517/923 AH), the *ashrāff* of Makkah readily accepted the Sultan's control. The authority of *al-ashrāff* as representatives of Constantinople was recognized in the major cities of Ḥedjāz.

<sup>31</sup> Figure source: Gabrieli, Francisco. The Arab Revival. London: Thames and Hudson, 1961. 26.



main cities. Hogarth<sup>32</sup> stated that Ḥedjāz was the most important province of Turkey in Arabia (it was on Ḥedjāz alone that the sultan could base his claims to the title of Caliph). The possession of the Holy Cities in the hands of the sultan made him the chief Muslim ruler<sup>33</sup>. Yet, this should not be understood as a colonization, for Arabia was hardly under the complete control of the Ottomans like other Arab provinces. Zeine<sup>34</sup> stated that Makkah and Al-Madinah, far from paying tribute to Constantinople, were tax-exempt and received a large annual subsidy at the cost of Egypt. A major character of the Ottoman rule as described by Raymond<sup>35</sup> was their flexibility in accepting a local representative of these provinces to govern in their name. The Ottomans, rather than trying to set up a centralized administration, preferred to leave a fair amount of autonomy to national, religious and professional groups. In Ḥedjāz, and side by side with the Ottoman government there was the authority of the *sharīf* of Makkah who was, in most cases, a selected native and the sole power in Ḥedjāz.

The Sharī'ah (Islamic law), governed all aspects of life in Ottoman states. By the time of Selim I, the *Ḥanafī* form of Shari'a had become the law of the empire, although it did not apply in the holy cities of Makkah and Al-Madinah where the *Shāfi'ī* and *Mālikī* sects were dominant. Because of the domination of Sunni Islam in Ḥedjāz<sup>36</sup>, the application of Shari'a by the Ottomans meant more acceptability of their regime than in any other province in the empire, where the conflict between the demands of the Holy Law and local religious practices were liable to cause extensive friction.

---

<sup>32</sup> Hogarth, David G. Hejaz Before World War I. New York: Falcon-Oleander, 1978. 11-86.

<sup>33</sup> Under the Ottoman arrangement, Ḥedjāz meant the North-Western province of Arabia (from Aqaba Gulf to Lith). It was a *wilāyyah* (state) whose *wālī* (governor) resided at Makkah in winter and at Taif in summer. Under the *wālī* there were four *kāzāt* (districts): Yanbu, Rabegh, Jeddah, and Lith.

<sup>34</sup> Zeine, Zeine N. Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism. Lebanon: Khayat's, 1958. 11-14. Hogarth also confirmed that Makkah and Al-Madinah were tax-free cities (which was unusual of the Ottoman regime) and received subsidies from the treasuries of Egypt and Constantinople.

<sup>35</sup> Raymond, André. The Great Arab Cities in the 16th and 18th Century: An Introduction. New York: New York University Press, 1984. *Passim*.

<sup>36</sup> A minority of Arab Shiite Muslims inhabited Al-Madinah, few Christians (Arab and otherwise) resided in Jeddah and Taif, while tribes of Arabian Jews resided in southern Ḥedjāz (now 'Asīr region).

Although the Ottomans were expelled from the Gulf area in 1669/1079 AH, they retained interest in Ḥedjāz as the centre of the world of Islam, and were still able to appoint the grand *sharīf* of Makkah. By 1814/1231 AH, the Egyptians were in control of the Ḥedjāz under Mohammed Ali Pasha<sup>37</sup>. His death in 1849/1265 AH ended all **direct** Ottoman and Egyptian interference in Ḥedjāz as the 'Guardians of Makkah.' In 1869/1285 AH, the opening of the Suez Canal brought the Red Sea back into world affairs, and the Turks and Egyptians indirectly controlled trade and the monetary affairs of Ḥedjāz. By the end of World I in 1918/1336 AH, Turkey was still the leading orthodox Muslim power indirectly affecting aspects of life in Ḥedjāz<sup>38</sup>. This period experienced an increasing Egyptian influence upon the Ḥedjāzī house (e.g., the introduction of balconies and the symmetry of the house plan and elevations). It was also marked by the presence of large merchant families migrating from Egypt and Damascus and settling in the major business centres of Ḥedjāz (mainly in Jeddah and Makkah). These families were responsible for the introduction of a great variety of buildings and lifestyles.

The expansion of cities under the Ottomans took the form of vast suburban districts developing along the main commercial routes. The Ottoman government and their representatives in Ḥedjāz (the *sharīf* of Makkah), were in constant contact with Cairo, Aleppo, Baghdad and Damascus as major population and trade centres. Ḥedjāzī towns and cities were in turn highly influenced by the culture, art and architecture, and construction techniques (along with the terminologies used by clients and artisans)<sup>39</sup> of these major cities. This sort of intensified relationship between these cities during the Ottoman rule, persuaded historians of architecture to conclude that these cities shared very similar urban and architecture characteristics.

Although Ḥedjāz was under the direct and indirect Ottoman rule for at least 120 years, in such a region where they would want to express their explicit authority

---

<sup>37</sup> During the first half of the 19th century, Mohammed Ali and Ibraheem Pasha (his adopted son) dominated the affairs of Ḥedjāz and 'Asīr.

<sup>38</sup> According to Lackner, *Sharīf* Hussain of Makkah himself had a Turkish wife, and his sons were educated in Turkish schools.

<sup>39</sup> Construction terminologies used by Ḥedjāzī and Egyptian artisans are similar for most cases: titles for the city districts like *ḥārah* in Egypt meaning a residential quarter (*n.pl. ḥārāt*) and *maḥillāh/mūḥallah* in Syria (*n.pl. maḥillāt*) having the same meaning, are used interchangeably in Ḥedjāz. Other similarities also exist like *'omdah* (*n.pl. 'omad*), *sheikh el ḥāra* (*n.pl. sheḥokh*) for the head of the residential quarter.

over the Muslim world with buildings of prestige in the formal style, nothing of the sort ever took place in any of the Ḥedjāzī cities (except in 'Asīr region in the south). Perhaps one of the reasons for the non-existence of any secular or religious buildings in Ḥedjāz is the fear of indignation by the Islamic world that a grand structure might challenge the pre-eminence of the two Holy Mosques. It was always safer, honourable and more acceptable to enlarge the existing structures of the two Holy Mosques, which the Ottomans did on more than one occasion.

Another reason for not building monumentally in Ḥedjāz might have been the strength of the local tradition and social foundation that prevented the building of such evidence of the Ottoman presence (as mentioned earlier in the cases of Makkah and Al-Madinah). In any case, and as Raymond puts it *"one must also recognize the fact that the Ottoman rule [in Ḥedjāz] was definitely consolidated only during the 17th century, at a time when the most active phase of building in Ottoman style was nearly over."*<sup>40</sup>

In 1926, King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud gained control of Ḥedjāz and was proclaimed in the same year 'the King of Ḥedjāz and Sultan of Najd and its Dependencies.' By the year 1932 he became the ruler of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This year not only marked the birth of Saudi Arabia, but the emergence of a new era in the development of a once nomadic and tribal agglomeration. This nation emerged from centuries of hardship and deprivation to find itself endowed with a source of immeasurable wealth, which it was initially not prepared to control and to manage.

The legal and economic systems maintained their religious bases in accordance with the Islamic Shari'ah. Saudi Arabia was (and officially still is) the only nation in the Islamic world to use the Holy Qur'ān as a constitution and a political system. Again the religious base tends to surface even at the political level to emphasize its dominant role in every aspect of life in this country. But after its establishment, the kingdom found itself supported by huge wealth that, indirectly, shifted its precedence from a religiously-based culture to an economically and politically-based development system. The social crises started with a headlong rush into the imitation of Western-oriented development, along with the foreign ways of life it introduced. This is

---

<sup>40</sup> Raymond, 1984. 105.



exhibited through an increase in Western building designs, techniques, etc. The events that caused the cultural transformation in the country without offering a replacement, are discussed in more details in the following chapter and in chapter eleven.

To pinpoint but a few of the economic and political consequences; the urban aspects of the Arabian Muslim Ḥedjāzī cities were completely altered to reflect the abrupt switch of doctrine. The predominant economic-oriented convictions of the entire society led to a modern Western, profit and show-oriented architecture. At a moment of time, one was able to pinpoint the different international planning and architectural schools of thought that the Saudis bought (e.g., the British garden cities and green belts, the American grid-iron street layout, highways and grand avenues, flyovers, suburban villas, glass towers and shopping centres, French-designed and built international airports and German seaports).

### **1.2.2. The family in Ḥedjāz**

The society which we are dealing with is a tradition-directed one. It organizes itself around traditional cultural beliefs and patterns. Historically, it was basically a stable community. Necessity and survival were key organizing principles, whereby tradition was the accepted mode of conformity and any deviation from it was neither desired nor tolerated. Conformity was ensured through 'fitting in' at all costs.

A house in this society, as discussed later in the thesis, was a definable spatial entity shared by all members. There was a collective identification with 'place' which concretized the ground of home, and the place of home was not easily distinguishable from the people inside it. The relative scarcity of resources left little sense of choice about one's home. Rather, the accident of birth in a particular place and community was accepted as determinative of one's home. From this, it ensues that family was an important component of this society. The familiar was closely bound up with home; the familiar was that with which one identified. The importance of a family name in this kind of society become clear: one was part of a clan first and foremost, even before one was an autonomous individual, a category which traditionally-directed societies virtually preclude.

### 1.2.2.1. Social structure of Ḥedjāzī families (‘ā’ilāt/‘awā’il)

In traditional Ḥedjāz, individuals’ lives were centred around the family. An individual’s place within the community was determined first by his membership in an extended family, and secondly by the membership of his extended family within the larger kin-group. This meant that his or her participation in larger social groups had to be through the family, and not on the basis of individualistic merits and affairs. The fact that the family belonged to a larger social group only strengthened the family unity - for the stronger the family as a whole, the greater its weight within the kin-group, and the more significant and influential its members could be.

Three types of family units still exist in Ḥedjāz. The first and simplest type is the nuclear family, consisting of the father, the mother and their children. This elementary unit is seldom, if ever, economically or socially independent. Its relatively small size means that the nuclear family is the least significant family type in the culture of Arabia - in contrast with the extended family. The second type is the ‘ā’ilah, or ‘extended family’. It consists of the father, the mother and the children, unwed paternal aunts and sometimes unwed paternal uncles. In short this unit is composed of blood relatives plus women who are introduced to the kinship through marriage. Historically, this was the most common type of family structure in all Ḥedjāzī towns. Large as it might be, this unit tended to occupy one dwelling or a group of dwellings connected with a central court (or built close to each other or often attached to one another). It was an economic as well as a social unit which was governed by the grandfather or the eldest man in the family<sup>41</sup>.

The third family type existed mainly within the rural societies of traditional Arabia. In Ḥedjāz, this type was formed in villages, but appeared in towns and cities during the late nineteenth century. It was the agglomeration of extended families forming a part of a wider kin-group. This type of blood kinship unit was the clan or *qabīlah*. It consisted of all persons bearing the same surname and were supposed to have descended from the same parental ancestor - regardless of whether they lived in the same locality or not.

---

<sup>41</sup> Al-Maghrabī, M. ‘Alī. *Malāmiḥ el Ḥayāt al Edjtimā’iyyah Fī el Ḥedjāz*. [(Arabic) Aspects of the Ḥedjāzī Social Life] Jeddah: Tehamah, 1982; Hopkins, Nicolas, and Saad Eddin Ibrahim. *Arab Society: Social Science Perspective*. Cairo: The American University Press, 1985. While these authors studied and wrote about different Middle Eastern cities, similar family structures seem to prevail.

This research is mainly concerned with the first two types of family structures, and the extended family in particular. The *'ā'ilah* provided the primary and fundamental constituent in the structure of the larger community of Ḥedjāz, acting as a nucleus in the promotion and the maintenance of strong social ties and behavioural norms. This family unit was publicly responsible for the general conduct and certain disciplinary measures to redress any offence of its members against the rest of the community.

Ideally, the Ḥedjāzī family was a multi-generational extended family, which was usually centred around a business enterprise. It comprised the head of the family and his wife or wives, all his sons, their wives and children, all unmarried daughters, married or unmarried uncles, aunts and a number of other elderly relatives. The ideal was to have such a large number of generations under one roof. But the actual size of Ḥedjāzī families seems to have been much smaller than this would imply. Al-Maghrabī and al-Anṣārī<sup>42</sup> basing their descriptions of the Ḥedjāzī family on actual cases of large urban merchant families, suggest that the average size of an urban merchant Ḥedjāzī family in the first half of the 19th century living in a large house - or a complex of houses - was between 13 to 18 persons, for a middle-sized family house from eight to ten persons, and for a poorer fisherman or a peasant family house from five to seven persons. Such information suggests that the actual family size in traditional Ḥedjāz greatly differed from the ideal size (the actual family size today is far below both the ideal and the traditional).

#### 1.2.2.2. Social relations between members of *'a'ilāt/ 'awā'il*

What emerged from the tribal organization of pre-Islamic Ḥedjāz was a patriarchal extended family, ritualistically governed by the Islamic sharī'ah, but actually a function of other age-old social forces where social solidarity was based on common ancestry. When Islam was introduced in Arabia, there were already previous value systems established by old civilizations. Islamic values were then transplanted, modified, or co-existed with some of the previously held values. Some *jāhiliyyah* (the pre-Islamic state of paganism) values and norms - while subdued or moderated by

---

<sup>42</sup> Al-Maghrabī, 1982; Al-Anṣārī, 'Abdul Qudūss. *Mausū'at Tārīkh Madīnat Jeddah*. [(Arabic) The Encyclopedia of the History of the City of Jeddah]. Cairo: Dār Miṣr Lilṭibā'ah, 1982.

Islam - persisted in Ḥedjāz<sup>43</sup>. What remained obvious in Western Arabia, however, is the role played by Islam's legislative norms which substituted religious affiliation in place of kinship and tribal affiliation as the rationale for social organization. The mix among all these elements produced varying configurations of values, norms and behavioural patterns in the Ḥedjāzī community as a whole, and its local communities, all of which helped in producing a basic matrix of social solidarity that transformed a predominantly tribal society into closely-knit communities.

Furthermore, the Ḥedjāzī inhabitants<sup>44</sup> were in constant contact with foreign Muslim and non-Muslim peoples and customs. Al-Anṣārī adds that many of the traditional values of the Ḥedjāzī society were generated during the period of the Ottoman rule (17th-19th century) when the blend with the Turkish/Egyptian culture was at its height. On one hand they adopted and assimilated customs and habits of a variety of non-Arab Islamic societies, Persian, Turkish and Indian, but on the other hand, they retained a core of regional, Arab and Islamic characteristics. Kiernan's<sup>45</sup> concluding description of Jeddah was that "there are few true Arabs of the Hejaz among the population, which consisted of merchants and traders from Yemen, Hadramaut, Egypt, Syria and Anatolia, with East Indians and Malays, a mixed stock, intermarried with Abyssinian slaves." Over the centuries, the incorporation and absorption of these external influences, coupled with a strong local component, endowed Ḥedjāz with a distinctive identity, a fact that led also to the heterogeneity of the Ḥedjāzī population (unlike the rest of Saudi Arabia).

Three basic age groups can be identified in the extended families of traditional Ḥedjāz. These are: the youngsters (*atfāl, awlād*) including all boys and girls up to the

---

<sup>43</sup> For instance, the belief in, and the propitiation of spirits, ghosts and demons of many different kinds and descriptions; interpretation of dreams and omens; the evil eye, charms and amulets; vows and sacrifice.

<sup>44</sup> Because of its religious centres, Ḥedjāz has been absorbing pilgrims from different ethnic groups who settled in the country and became urbanized through time. Some members of these groups tended to concentrate in certain communities where they retained certain characteristics of their original cultures. However, there is no official data concerning these ethnic groups but their distribution is evident along certain professional lines. For example: the Yemenis, Sudanese and Somalians in low-prestige jobs, Hadrameine as merchants, Javanese, Indian and Pakistanis as labourers, Egyptians as craftsmen, teachers and civil servants, and Palestinian as artisans and shop-keepers. See Walpole, Norman. Area Hand Book for Saudi Arabia. Washington, D.C.: The American University Press, 1971. *Passim*.

<sup>45</sup> Kiernan, R. H. The Unveiling of Arabia: The Story of Arabian Travel and Discovery. London: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1937. 120.

age of twelve or thirteen years old, the unmarried (*'ozāb*) and the married adults (*'āwā'il*). In public, there were strict rules governing the interaction between these three categories; for example, it was rare for a youngster to sit with an adult and converse. Youngsters were usually seen in an adult gathering serving tea, holding the ablution tankard or taking the role of messengers<sup>46</sup>.

Apart from segregation, the age criterion in Ḥedjāz showed itself in public behaviour, by considering the older people as equivalent to parental uncles, or as fathers, or grandfathers if they were very old. Often older people were addressed by the kinship term (*'ammī*) or (*sīdī*) (my parental uncle or my master). In his diary, al-Maghrabī narrates a story about his elder brother Ibrāhīm (three years older than himself) being addressed in the house by all members of the family including himself as *'sīdī Ibrāhīm*'<sup>47</sup>.

The internal organization, values, norms and rules of proper conduct of the Ḥedjāzī family relied heavily on physical and psychological guidance and supervision of the elder members of the family. Individuals took cues of proper behaviour from the traditional authority and heritage, and were not encouraged to choose or judge outside this framework. The socialization processes over-emphasized rote-learning and memorization of every single detail. Failure to comply with these manners meant shunning by other members of the society and punishment by the regulators (parents, heads of the *ḥāra*, or the local authority).

Gender was another criterion for two definite social groups: each sex was governed by a religious code of sexual mores and ethical ideals with special emphasis on strict purity and decency, both premarital and post-marital. There existed the world of men and the world of women. In the Ḥedjāzī community it was unthinkable to have free mixing between the two worlds, or that a thing done by one sex could also be done by a member of the other sex (e.g., young boys were expected to eat with the men unlike girls who always withdrew to the mother's section). Men had their scope of activities outside the house and women were mainly confined to their homes. Men usually met for their unprepared gathering outside the house, while women met inside

---

<sup>46</sup> Al-Anṣārī, 1982. 243.

<sup>47</sup> Al-Maghrabī, 1982. 32.



the house. On walking along the street and alleyways, women kept near the wall, while men walked in the middle of the street<sup>48</sup>. Women did not participate either in individual or communal worship in the mosque as they are not obliged to do so (optional, although hints have been given on the merits of praying at home by the Prophet).

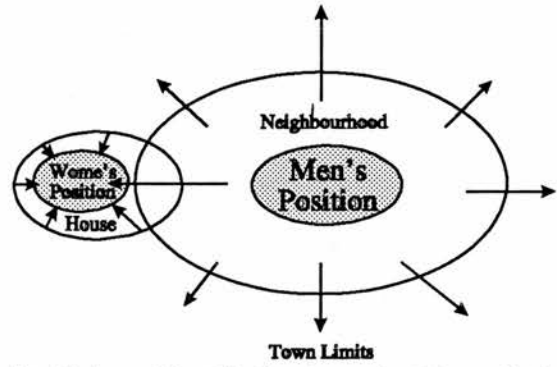


Fig. 1.9. In traditional Hedjāz, there existed the world of men and the world of women.

Although the religious life in Hedjāz contained many pre-Islamic elements, the basically religious attitude of Hedjāzīs made religion the fundamental motivating force in most phases and aspects of this culture, and it had its say in every act and moment in people's lives. All customs and traditions of Hedjāz were considered to be basically religious, for whatever was old, customary and traditional followed religion. Whatever men did, they always conformed to custom, tradition and religion. These three formed an inseparable three-in-one constellation which ruled the skies of Hedjāz. For a further understanding of the social structure of the family and its functioning, it is appropriate here to discuss the stylized norms of relationships and behaviour that occurred between the members of the family and the society at large:

### A) The husband-wife relationship

This pattern was one where the husband was the partner who enjoyed the highest position in the family. He was, as the traditional saying went, "*the supporting pillar of the house*," who was expected to make all the important decisions. But - as mentioned earlier - the wife was the manageress of the house. She was the keeper of the money, legal documents and the keys of the various chests in the house. The economy of the Hedjāzī family revolved around the fact that the man was to earn and the woman to save, to expend judiciously and to administer the products of labour to the best advantage. The economic dependence of women upon men was part of the Hedjāzī/Muslim concept of division of labour, for the women labour contribution in

<sup>48</sup> These norms were common in most Middle Eastern societies as suggested by Lutfiyyah, Abdulah, and C. Churchill, ed. Readings in Arab Middle Eastern Societies and Cultures. Paris: Mouton, 1970. *Passim*.

the home is as productive as the man's out of it. On the whole, the structural attitude of the husband-wife relationship was one of possession and protection. While the husband assumed the major role in all activities outside the house, the women ruled almost supreme in matters connected with household organization<sup>49</sup>.

### **B) The parent-children relationship**

This relationship was best exemplified in the duty of the children towards their father (in general, of junior to senior). The father-son relationship was based on a mixture of love, fear and respect. It was the central relationship in the family: the son had the duty of obedience towards the father; and the father the duty of educating and training his sons. As a son grew older, the relationship grew more equal, particularly with the eldest son. When the head of the family grew old, he might have handed-over the effective command of the household to his eldest son; but respect, consultation and deference were always due.

In practice, the father dealt with his sons, while the mother was responsible for the up-bringing of her daughters, but there was a good deal of overlapping between the two domains. The tradition was for daughters to be treated more affectionately; and this was perhaps related to the fact that their destiny was to leave the family on marriage, and to take their obedience and loyalty to their husband's family.

Generally, the care of children was entrusted to the mother and the other women of the house<sup>50</sup>. In early childhood, the infant was disciplined by the mother (the authority of the father manifested itself more strongly as the youngster grew older). She was also entrusted with the children's early education of basic manners and assumed the role of the mediator between father and son. The authority of the parents was sanctioned by religion as well as the culture. Obedience of children to their parents came next to Muslims' major obligations to God, then the Prophet (having parents' blessings is a pre-requisite for both piety and success).

---

<sup>49</sup> Naṣīf, Hūsain B. Muḥammad. *Māqāl al-Ḥedjāz wa Ḥaḍirūhū*. [(Arabic) Ḥedjāz Past and Present]. Cairo: [n.p.], 1931. *Passim*.

<sup>50</sup> The concept of 'trading places' within the extended family was one where the brother, for example, was obliged to play a number of roles at the same time and place: he was a humble son, a determined husband, an affectionate brother, a helpful cousin...etc.

A son was expected to observe many rules in connection with his father, especially in public. A mature son was expected to act within certain limits ranging from sitting beside his father in gatherings (but playing a subordinate role, usually evidenced by the fact that he spoke as little as possible), to refraining from drinking coffee or smoking in his father's presence (Coffee was the drink associated with adults only, while smoking in the presence of senior family members was unthinkable). The son should never be sitting down while his father was standing in his presence or passing-by. He also was not permitted to sleep in the same room with his father.

### C) The family-outsider relationship

Residents of the quarter (*ḥāra*) were considered to belong to the *ḥāra* sub-culture. Members of the *ḥāra* shared certain historical, ecological and socio-cultural experience which point to an identifiable lifestyle. Today's image of residents of the traditional Ḥedjāzī *ḥāra* is a consequence of experience and popular stereotype; of a strong and intricate social web of kinship, friendship and acquaintanceship among the residents of the *ḥāra*.

Disputes between members of the *ḥāra* were solved in the presence of the 'omdah<sup>51</sup> or *sheikh el-ḥāra* (the elder leader of the residential quarter), the elder members of the *ḥāra* and the concerned party. Whatever the verdict was, the complainers did not have the choice of accepting or rejecting it. Bokhari<sup>52</sup> narrates a story of a prominent family in Jeddah which declined to build a large house in the *ḥāra* when it was found that this house would conflict with the privacy and wishes of a neighbouring family. Thus the prevailing social life took the form of a family life, governed by obligations, friendships and esteem for social relationships. The main virtue of this communal social system lies in the ability of the individual in the community to restrain and adjust himself to his society, to show courtesy and to be involved in the social evolution of respectful community relations.

---

<sup>51</sup> He was an informal leader who was selected on basis of age and other individual attributes. Although he could be assigned by the governor of the city, the 'omdah was only influential rather than authoritative within the *ḥāra*.

<sup>52</sup> Bokhari, Abdulla Yahia. Jeddah: A Study in Urban Formation. Unpublished Dissertation. University of Pennsylvania, 1978. 109.



Most families in Ḥedjāz were related to one another through intermarriage. Aside from following the traditional Arabian rule of the 'cousin first,' there were external marriage cases which were used to achieve certain social objectives, such as the segmentation of the family's wealth between relatives or the consolidation of disputed families (towards the middle 1900s, external marriages aiming at the association with other families' social prestige and wealth were common). Marriage outside the extended family was also the means by which foreign immigrants to Ḥedjāz became assimilated.

The extended patriarchal family of Ḥedjāz provided its members with a multitude of support. They never had to face the world alone; they were a social and economic unit. To the Ḥedjāzīes, the extended family does not die: generations succeed one another in the same family. Since the most important link here was the tie uniting people belonging to the same lineage, it followed that the marriage did not cause the younger generations to leave the parental family: instead, the young person brought his spouse back to live with the group.

The pilot study<sup>53</sup> that was conducted from March 29 to May 19, 1990 in the cities of Jeddah, Makkah and Al-Madinah helped filling a number of gaps in this section, by elaborating on the character of this Ḥedjāzī institution and the traditional norms governing the conduct of its members from their own point of view. By this I mean simple basic activities which may differ from the prescribed expectations owing to specific social pressures and social controls that maintained law and order in the community, as well as religious and mythical sanctions which served to validate socialization.

### 1.2.3. The socio-economic environment

This old place of pilgrimage of the pagan Arabs before the Prophet Muhammad was transformed into a place of pilgrimage for a world

---

<sup>53</sup> In this study, a number of interviews were conducted with traditional families and builders (*mu'allemin*) of Ḥedjāz upon which the later parts of this research are based. The main sources for this thesis are the three *mu'allemin*: *mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, April 6-15, 1990), *mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī (Jeddah, March 29-30, 1990) and *mu'allemin* Ḥamzah al-Rīfī (Al-Madinah, April 25-30, 1990). The clients and households are represented by the two families of al-Makkī (Jeddah/Makkah, May 18-19, 1990), and 'Afīf (Jeddah/Makkah, March 12-13, 1990). The credentials of these informants are discussed in chapter four in more details.

religion. And without much wealth of its own, the Hejaz became assured of an eternal livelihood. (Bertram Thomas)<sup>54</sup>.

Before the discovery of oil, there was little change in the three main sectors of economic life: agriculture in Al-Madinah and Taif, fishing and trade in the towns of the Red Sea like Jeddah and Yanbu, and trading in the inland towns of Makkah and Al-Madinah. On the Red Sea ports, where trading has been the main activity since antiquity, these fishing hamlets also provided food for the adjacent towns. Burckhardt observed that Jeddah was the port for Arabia and Egypt and a mart for Indian goods and the coffee of Yemen<sup>55</sup>. The trade of Ḥedjāz, and particularly of Jeddah and Makkah, was created mainly by the needs of the pilgrimage, and apart from the export of dates, consisted almost entirely of imports. Nevertheless, considerable revenues were collected on goods imported to Jeddah, and Makkah, but these went to the already established houses (families) of merchants.

The service-based economy of traditional Ḥedjāz did yield much development of the urban structure of its towns. Most construction activities were based on the building of dwellings for the well-to-do merchant families, which were very few compared with the apartment buildings they built for the accommodation of pilgrims. Others, such as artisans and shopkeepers, either built their own houses on a much smaller scale than those of merchant families, or rented their accommodation from the wealthy merchant landlords. These were specially modified extended family houses divided into apartments and were also situated in the market area. The lower income groups of the population were in destitute conditions that they could only afford huts built out of mud and palm-fronds which were kept on the outskirts of towns.

The discovery of oil in Arabia completely unsettled the old economic life of the Peninsula. Although oil was found in the 1930s, it was not until the early 1960s that the income derived had been of sufficient magnitude to really give hope to the people of the country. The massive oil fields began to be exploited from 1933 onwards, with enormous consequences for this part of Arabia. In his study of the economic and political systems of Saudi Arabia, El Mallakh<sup>56</sup> states that architects

---

<sup>54</sup> Thomas, 1937. 242-295.

<sup>55</sup> Cited in Kiernan, 1937. 120.

<sup>56</sup> El Mallakh, Ragaei. Saudi Arabia Rush to Development. London: Croom Helm, 1982. 13-409.

and planners of the world could not have envisioned wealthier clients than those who invited them to the Western region during the oil boom. To give but a quick glance at this situation: the kingdom's 1970-1975 Five-Year Plan called for an expenditure of \$145 billion. Its 1975-1980 Five-Year Plan nearly doubles this amount (\$268 billion). This in turn has set in motion an accelerated labour importation process, and an uncompromising construction boom. (In the last decade alone, 2000 villages were electrified, 15,000 kilometres of paved-roads were built, and 300,000 housing units were constructed).

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CRISES: CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ḤEDJĀZ

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CRISES: CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ḤEDJĀZ

---

#### Introduction

Ḥedjāz is considered by all Muslims to be the heartland of Islam. Therefore, and for very obvious reasons, the traditional life in Ḥedjāz originated in, and was based upon Islam. All the population of the region were Muslims except for the few foreign delegations who resided in the coastal towns of the Red Sea. Today, Islam is the one and only religion of Saudis, an example of a society that, ideally, should conform fully to the doctrines of Islam in every aspect of its life. However, this is not exactly the case in the kingdom today because of the recent socio-economic changes which have cast their shadows on this convention.

In traditional Ḥedjāz, the population was largely sedentary, living partly by agriculture and partly by trade in the religious centres. The majority of the coastal population maintained a lifestyle that was dependent on fishing, boat building, or working as porters, or they were involved in large-scale trading. The great merchant families who occupied the towns of Ḥedjāz had come from many parts of the world, and from the inland towns and deserts of Arabia itself.

Private life, as we saw earlier, was family-centred in Ḥedjāz. People lived almost exclusively with their own families. The entire family, which might have consisted of several dozen members, resided together in a single house or in several buildings around a common room or a courtyard. The family in Ḥedjāz represented the basic social unit around which an individual's life evolved. The word family, *'ā'ilah*, literally means the social unit that supports its members. In Ḥedjāz, words for family and household - *bait* - are used interchangeably (which is the case in the ancient, classical and modern Semitic language). On the whole, the extended family could be regarded as an intermediate social unit between the marital family and the clan, shouldering the social responsibility for the smaller units and held accountable for the behaviour of its members.

Today this intensive family closeness has been somewhat dispersed. The imitation of the Western lifestyle by modern Saudis, has not only weakened the family ties, but also made it no longer the prime focus of loyalty. The pressures of modern development and the superficial attractions of materialistic cultures and lifestyles, set little store by traditional values, reducing privacy and weakening social and family cohesion. Some may argue that the family still commands the devotion and respect of its members, and serves as an instrument of moral and material guidance in an indirect fashion. Only a closer look at the family institution may exhibit the factual standing of such an argument.

The great houses in the towns of Ḥedjāz have been abandoned for modern single family homes (houses or apartments). Change, where it has occurred, has consisted of the departure of married children to homes of their own and in lessening of parental authority. According to al-Farsy<sup>1</sup> the population structure of today's Ḥedjāz is still relatively simple as contrasted to other societies. Its relative simplicity rests on the fact that it is sparsely populated, and the population is concentrated in a few areas. No linguistic divisions exist at all, either in terms of script, language or dialect. The various tribal divisions are not based on ethnicity but rather on an earlier pattern of social organizations. Although the population structure seems to lead to a coherent image of a society, we find that the society today is very complex (i.e., social class, traditional ties) resulting in an even harder task for the architect to deal with. Although the uprooting of the traditional Saudi social organisation is only a fairly recent phenomenon, and the social formation which is replacing it is only beginning, but certain trends are already visible.

Al-Farsy also argues that the socio-cultural crisis taking place in Saudi Arabia today, is not breaking the 'rules of development.' Most developing countries of the world, he claims, risk the loss of their cultural identity while modern transformation takes place. Alien societal norms and values, not in harmony with these nations' heritage and cultures, seem to overwhelm indigenous values. Although I agree with this argument, I find that he has missed the point that what is adding to the severity of the problem in the region - besides the circumstances of development that we discussed in chapter one - is the paramount urge and desire of the natives themselves to abandon their own culture willingly and at the earliest possible opportunity.

---

<sup>1</sup> Al-Farsy, Fouad. Saudi Arabia: A Case Study in Development. London: KPI, 1986. 7-194.

## 2.1 The process of social transformation

Saudi Arabia has come rushing into the twentieth century and the forefront of the world's political and economic stage... and now as a major supplier to the world's seemingly insatiable energy needs. Nothing in our early or recent history or cultural experience has prepared Saudi Arabia for this role it must today play - except its all pervasive faith in God and an unfailing belief in His Mercy and Generosity. (Prince Saud Al-Faisal)<sup>2</sup>.

Like most of the regions of Arabia, Ḥedjāz has undergone a transformation in the last ten years, unprecedented in its history. Social, economic and political changes over the last fifty years and their consequential effects, have raised many questions about the devastating results of this rapid change on the environment, culture and identity of the society as a whole. The sudden material transformation of a way of life, which had remained at a pre-industrial stage for centuries, could not have failed to leave a deep impact on the society. Although most, if not all, of the people of the region still eat traditional foods, wear traditional clothes, conform to old-age customs in behaviour and outlook, and their religion is still very much alive among a good number of people, yet the crisis is arising. In the search for a new Muslim Saudi identity, the position of the region is difficult. The following part of the chapter investigates some of the socio-cultural strains, suffered by those who care about their identity, through assembling the diverse forces that acted upon the various environments of Ḥedjāz concurrently.

A generalization is often made that the socio-economic life patterns of Ḥedjāz changed little between the message of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in the seventh century and the discovery of oil in the twentieth<sup>3</sup>. Although it would be an oversimplification to attribute all features of the whole country's new social order to oil, it is not an exaggeration to contend that oil has been the most important single factor in giving this order its characteristics.

---

<sup>2</sup> Prince Al-Faisal, Saud. Preface. Saudi Arabian Portfolio. By Robert Azzi. Switzerland: First Azimuth Ltd., 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Even up to 1952, there was a tax on all pilgrims (£ 65 per individual *ḥadj*), which was the financial pillar of the early Saudi Arabian state. This was abolished after the discovery of oil. See Fisher, W. B. A Physical, Social and Regional Geography. London: Methun & Co., Ltd., 1978. 169-469.



While there is no doubt that only recently did petroleum revenues radically alter the pattern of life followed by the majority of the Ḥedjāzī people, and that the direct impact of oil industry has been localized, other forces of change have also been at work in the area, some of which were indigenous, others emanating from outside. These outside forces - perhaps arguably - have frequently had the most profound effects on the society, as this chapter and chapter eleven reveal.

Historically, the mechanism of cultural transfer in Ḥedjāz started when new Muslims began to interact with cultures of other Islamic lands, during their travel to attend the *ḥalāqāt* (circles) of the learned *‘ulamā* (religious sage) in Makkah and Al-Madinah. The **first phase** of cultural transfer was marked by this mechanism which was further activated by traders of Ḥedjāz. During their caravan trips, these merchant acted as cultural postmen for their agricultural neighbours on all sides of the Muslim world. Even the simplest of the desert tribesmen, as they migrated about, were able to carry new ideas between the more civilized fringes of their realms. Robinson<sup>4</sup> states that these intermediate groups, along with the stream of pilgrims, deserve credit for an enormous transferrals of ideas as well as goods from China westward, from the Mediterranean into the sub-Saharan Africa, and from the Middle East outward in all directions.

The **second phase** of cultural interaction took place before the unification of Saudi Arabia as a state in 1932 AD/1351 AH. It was dependent on foreign workers of the more educated Arab nations. Teachers, doctors and technicians were non-natives, mainly from Syria and Egypt. Towards the 1960s, and right before the oil boom, Saudi Arabia's dependence on migrant labour from the Arab world was greatly increasing.

The **third phase** of change followed the economic expansion of the 1970s, when the first and long-lasting contacts between the Saudis and Western cultures, namely American and British, took place. This time the number of delegations was much larger, and the culture was totally different<sup>5</sup>. The discovery of oil, along with

---

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, Francis. Atlas of the Islamic World Since 1500. Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1987. 80-91.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Farsy, Nyrop, and Shils argue that advisors and other agents of cultural change from similar cultures were less respectful of the indigenous context in which they worked than other foreigners from a totally different society. See Shils, Edward. Political Development in the New States. The Hague: Mouton, 1981



its wealth, social and administrative changes in the whole country, created a desire for instant solutions to development. Such a desire for instantaneous change (speed, efficiency and quality which are ruling parameters of modernity) made Western technology attractive for its ability to respond to rapid construction on an unprecedented scale and volume. This result has been a massive call for Western technology and the skilled man-power to implement and operate it, which in turn have produced a few other considerable socio-economic strains. The role of expatriate labour in building the country's infrastructure from the 1900s until the 1990s, and virtually from the ground up needs no further emphasis.

So the basic problem of oil and industrialization in the region according to Troeller<sup>6</sup>, was the lack of skilled man-power and raw material, both of which had to be imported. The Saudis had to recruit more and more skilled man-power from other Arab, North American, and European countries. The most crucial problem arising from such an imposing need for foreign man-power was the social impact caused by a multitude of alien customs, habits and ways of life, and the possible interference with the unique Islamic pattern of the region. The foreign social customs and habits had tremendous effects on the country's social mores, and posed a critical challenge for the future.

A 'socio-cultural dilemma' came as a result of two decades of residence in Saudi Arabia of a large foreign labour force, a figure which would reach over two million persons excluding dependents. Ibrahim<sup>7</sup> and al-Farsy argue that the effects of such large-scale cultural and human contacts, combined with a relatively short but intensive period of time, created sets of stress on the local culture and population. The new and diverse lifestyles introduced by Westerners and Asians, as well as northern Arabs, may have been disdained, avoided, or admired, but they were being constantly watched and portrayed by young Saudis. The government was then faced with the socio-cultural dilemma summarized in figure (2.1.).

---

(1962). 139; Nyrop, Richard et al. Area Handbook for Saudi Arabia. 3rd edn. Washington, D.C.: American University, Foreign Studies, 1977. 287.

<sup>6</sup> Troeller, Gray. The Birth of Saudi Arabia. London: Frank Cass, 1976. *Passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Ibrahim, Saad. The New Arab Social Order: A Study of the Social Impact of Oil Wealth. London: Westview Press, 1982. 5-136. Also see Al-Farsy, 1986. 7-194.

A slowing down of development could be seen as an opportunity for people to retain the traditional culture or even to create a contemporary 'Saudi Arabian culture' consistent with the developments in a country once governed by the traditional values and conduct of Islam and old Arab ethos. However, the government chose another compromise, which was to develop a new industrial and economic base, not entirely dependent upon petrol whether directly or indirectly, and to have the foreign technicians train a new generation of Saudi workers, a long-term investment that could have solved a great deal of the socio-cultural problems.

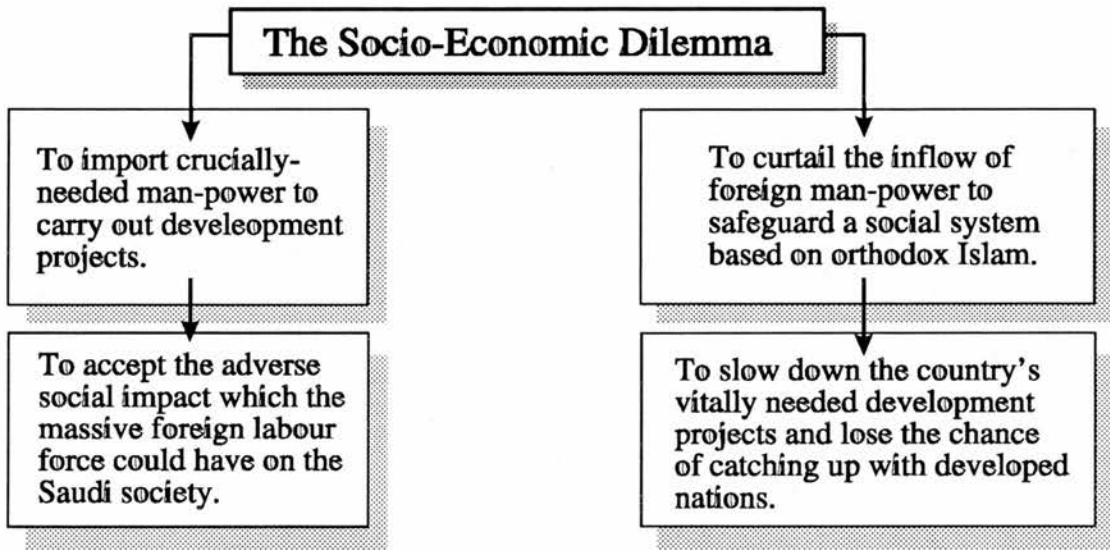


Fig. 2.1. The Kingdom's socio-economic dilemma of the 1970s.

Despite the government attempts to encourage technical training aiming at producing skilled labour, even through large grants to participants, these institutes were failing. The main reason was, indeed, socio-cultural. This is a country where, by tradition and contradictory to the religion, some occupations are considered more honourable than others, and where manual work in particular is associated with the less well-respected occupations (because traditionally it was handled by slaves, members of minor tribes or non-Arabs). Trade and office work are considered honourable, as the former in particular was the main activity of the centuries-old Ḥedjāz. Such customs not only increased dependency on foreign labourers, but might have also - historically speaking - hindered the emergence and development of professional and skilled artisans like those of Egypt, India and Syria, who made the latticed wooden windows and a host of other artifacts seen in traditional Ḥedjāz.

A **fourth phase** of social evolution crept in after the flow of the vast oil revenues of the 1970s. It was the crisis of 'materialism,' which was already asserting itself and eroding the religious foundation of the country's socio-religious structure. Against all teachings of Islam, on which this society was based, a forceful race started, aiming at the possession of all variety of hi-tech gadgets, modern artifacts, mansions with an open display of expensive and luxurious building materials and the rest of it. This consumerism has developed at a superficial level insofar as it involved neither the development of technology nor culture, depending merely on retailers.

Ibrahim and Hopkins<sup>8</sup> argue that the overflow of wealth to the Ḥedjāz region, relative to a decade ago, meant that a consumer society is developing on an unprecedented scale, and that the people of Ḥedjāzī have become gripped by the materialism of some foreign societies. I do not totally agree with this point of view; that it was the rule of the commodity which brought the final destruction of the inherent Ḥedjāzī ideals. My disagreement stems from the fact that Ḥedjāz was always a consumer society, depending on other foreign cultures for its livelihood. Hogarth and Fisher<sup>9</sup> report that goods were imported to Ḥedjāz from all parts of the orient (e.g., silks from Syria, carpets from Turkey and Persia, wood and brass work from India and Egypt). Yet I agree with his argument from the perspective that the main motive in both cases might have been different. From the importation of provisions and foodstuffs needed for the survival of the populace of an unfriendly environment, there was a change to a notion of importing every available secondary and luxury item produced somewhere in the world for the sake of the display of one's social status. Although it seems that the latter was not a new phenomenon in Ḥedjāz, the financial means to indulge in such materialism were only available for the few privileged merchants and Turkish Emirs. Now that money is flowing into so many hands, it is only natural that materialism spreads, at least until a certain amount of 'catching up' is done.

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibrahim, 1982. 5-136. Also see Hopkins, Nicholas, and Saad Eddin Ibrahim, ed. Arab Society: Social Science Perspective. Cairo: The American University Press, 1985; El Mallakh, Ragaei. Saudi Arabia Rush to Development. London: Croom Helm, 1982. 13-409.

<sup>9</sup> Hogarth, David. Hejaz Before World War I. New York: Falcon-Oleander, 1978. 11-86; Fisher, W.B. A Physical, Social and Regional Geography. London: Methun & Co., Ltd., 1978. 169-469.

The **fifth** and most damaging phase was again a result of the severe need for man-power. The government started a prompt education plan, aimed at improving the educational system for young Saudis. Technical and higher education programs were set as major priorities in the First and Second Five-Year Plans (1970-1980).

By the 1980s, many Saudis had been educated in the West (in 1980 there were 15,000 Saudi students in the U.S.A. alone)<sup>10</sup>, where they learned to judge themselves and their background in Westernized perspectives. Those who adopted these organizing principles and vocabularies placed themselves in an awkward and uncomfortable position of implicitly criticizing their own societies insofar as they were not yet Westernized! Young Saudis credited themselves by terming themselves pro-Western, that they were 'modernized', as though Western lifestyles were as positive to their livelihood as they are universal. Simmel asserts that today's *"large-scale communication and movement has brought many individuals into wider cultural participation. Trade and commerce, the travels of the student and sometimes of the tourist, are making more individuals multi-cultural."*<sup>11</sup> This is the best explanation to the situation of the modern Ḥedjāzī society which emerged during this period.

The reflection of this phase of severe cultural transformation on the urban and architectural personality of Ḥedjāzī cities was yet to be seen. Returning home, whether from higher education or a tour abroad<sup>12</sup>, this generation of Saudis has been Westernized enough to be dissatisfied and alienated. They began to build their own homes with this non-indigenous mentality. The extent of this research reveals that these buildings have not arisen out of either their true needs nor through the demands of the society, but that they were façades, imitating the West in order to cast away the charge of being 'backward' and 'uncivilized.' What actually happened is that this generation had the will and strength to break away from their tradition and to use 'self' rather than 'community' as a guide. This is unlike the traditional mode they left in which the similarities between members of the society far exceeded the differences,

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibrahim, 1982. 5-136.

<sup>11</sup> Simmel, George. "The Stranger." On Individuality and Social Forms. Ed. Donald N. Levine. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971. 178-179.

<sup>12</sup> As many as 900,000 travelled outside the Kingdom in 1979. That is nearly the fifth of the total native Saudi population. (Source: Saudi Arabia's Ministry of the Interior Statistical Year Book. Riyadh, 1979-1980. 222-231).

and the newly emerging mode of social organization has brought increased individualism.

The new houses of this generation appeared at first to be in the forefront of progress; they had air-conditioning and all the most modern features<sup>13</sup>. What was not immediately realized was that, being designed for the nuclear family consumer units, these homes meant the separation of the extended family and consequently far greater isolation of the women, young children and the elderly. And so, the traditional houses where the whole family once shared their evening meal, and where the children and old people had a particularly happy life, were left to decay with their age-old owners. The old who had a position of considerable prestige in the extended family - as they remained very much the heads of the family surrounded by generations of young descendants - were reduced to *once-a-month* visitors.

## Summary

The second most important factor - after the wealth of oil - contributing to the change in the Ḥedjāzī social structure seems to be a result of the industrial and scientific superiority of Western cultures. When the country was backed up by the science and knowledge of almost the entire world and was ready to build its infrastructure, the political and economic systems were totally devoted to the building of the future of the country in the up-to-date standards of the West. The acceleration by which this shift - from the traditional religiously-based system to a purely economic one - did not tolerate an appraisal phase of the repercussions of such a shift.

The modern Ḥedjāzī, like most people today, has become more of an internationalist as far as his culture is concerned. But unlike internationalists of gradually-matured cultures who are able to move in and out of different cultures (culturally fluent), the contemporary Ḥedjāzī has broken away from his traditional moorings and is culturally adrift, while he does not have a clear sense of belonging or an identity rooted in a 'home,' as discussed in chapter eleven. He suffers from a cultural distance which has resulted in a misunderstanding of the values of other

---

<sup>13</sup> These new villas - as discussed in chapters eleven and twelve - adopted new 'stylistic' elements derived from all Western architectural schools such as the Neo-Classical and early Modern architecture of Europe. For example, these villas incorporated Neo-Classical motifs such as triglyph, Corinthian columns and dentils, as well as Eastern decorative motifs such as Byzantine floral and leaf shapes.



national cultures because he is not basically in harmony with those of his own. This, in turn, has resulted in the culturally-eclectic attitude adopted by most of the contemporary Ḥedjāzīs today, and which is manifested in the new emerging habits, norms, beliefs, lifestyles and, most obviously, domestic architecture. He is hardly at home with himself and, hence, unable to produce one.

This is far from being another attempt to blame the West for all that has happened. It is simply the most significant force affecting those men who have returned with high qualifications from the West and favoured a transformation of the lifestyle modeled mainly on that of the United States. These 'modernists' or rather 'modernizers' support a way of life based on the nuclear family home, with all modern features and conveniences. The Westerners, on the contrary, should not have been the prime target of criticism by the native traditional revivalists<sup>14</sup>, for the science and knowledge they offered neither contradicted the religious bases of the country nor imposed a certain lifestyle on its inhabitants<sup>15</sup>. It was the attitude of the people of Arabia in their adoption of a modern lifestyle; they wanted to become modern so badly that they, willingly, foolhardily, inappropriately and unnecessarily emancipated themselves of all the goodness granted to them by their age-old beliefs. The more the Ḥedjāzīs modernized themselves through blind imitations, the less Ḥedjāzī they became: the more they asserted themselves as Muslim Arabs, the less they thought they were truly modern. Definitions of progress, in these circumstances were neither continuous nor coherent.

It is fully understood, however, that the social and economic upheavals discussed above could not have possibly taken place without a parallel transformation of the country's social structure. It is only since the 1960s and 1970s that traditional social structures have been uprooted under the contradictory pressures of a traditional

---

<sup>14</sup> From the point of view of the traditional 'revivalist,' the notion of blaming the West came during the process of the country's accommodation to mechanization and modernization of the building industry. It was then when a notion of deceitfulness became associated with 'Westernization,' while it was the blind copying and the insufficient adaptive methods that inflicted the most damage.

<sup>15</sup> The previous argument of Al-Farsy and Shills is partly believable, because most of the Western work force lived in compounds separated from the local residential areas, and the only contact took place in working places or in commercial areas, while the non-Saudi Arab work force were in direct daily contact with the population in residential, commercial, recreational and social places. Hence their influence might have been more effective. If such an argument stands valid, it will mean that the actual cultural change started prior to oil, but at a much slower pace, as the desire to imitate the West, which was a much stronger agent of change, came later on and did not exist in the case of Arab labourers.

lifestyle and economic expansion fully dependent on foreign concepts and expertise of development and modernization. Since the middle 1960s, the destruction of traditional family relations, the emergence of individualism, the keenness for materialistic self-presentation and the cultural sense of inferiority has been accelerated to the extent of which, by the late 1970s, it could be said that only few traces of the traditional structure remained.

Ideally, the Islamic community, *ummah*, is a society of equals before God. It also seemed that, traditionally, there were no local attempts to form any sort of a hierarchy. Societal hierarchy was introduced to Ḥedjāz, on a minor scale under the Turkish arrangements, and only the governing few enjoyed special titles. Today, with materialism dominating the atmosphere of the area, a social hierarchy is creeping into the society, based on financial status and affirmed by an explicit show of wealth.

A simple illustration of the difference between traditional and modern cultural foundations is proposed in the next diagram (Fig. 2.2.). It is realized, however, that the contrast between these two cultural bases needs a more laborious and deep analysis, yet, to prepare the ground for the following chapters, a personal perspective is built here on the interpretations of the differences drawn from the case-study of the Ḥedjāzī environment in this chapter.

I believe that the maintenance of the traditional Islamic values is possible while creating a modern industrial society, capable of living the best of the two worlds. The traditional lifestyle of Ḥedjāz itself was based on continuing traditions and beliefs, which in many ways are equally relevant today and ought to be considered in greater depth when a true Ḥedjāzī Muslim identity is sought. This should not be confused with the call to halt the country's progress and return to the past - definitely impossible even to think of. What is possible though is to use modern means to achieve traditional identities, instead of dismantling the traditional socio-cultural basis upon which life was based (Fig. 2.3.).

The identity of the society was achieved through a mutually supportive circle, where the tradition of the locality safeguarded the local architecture, as El-Wakil<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> El-Wakil, Abdel Wahid. "Identity, Tradition and Architecture." *Arab Architecture Past and Present*. Ed. Antony Hutt. Durham: Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 1984. 26.



puts it, by maintaining its religious values and sincerely responding to its environment, while architecture safeguarded the environment in which tradition survived by rendering the set of functions appropriated to it. The environmental content and connections of Ḥedjāz throughout its history, shaped the experience, and hence the behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs of inhabitants.

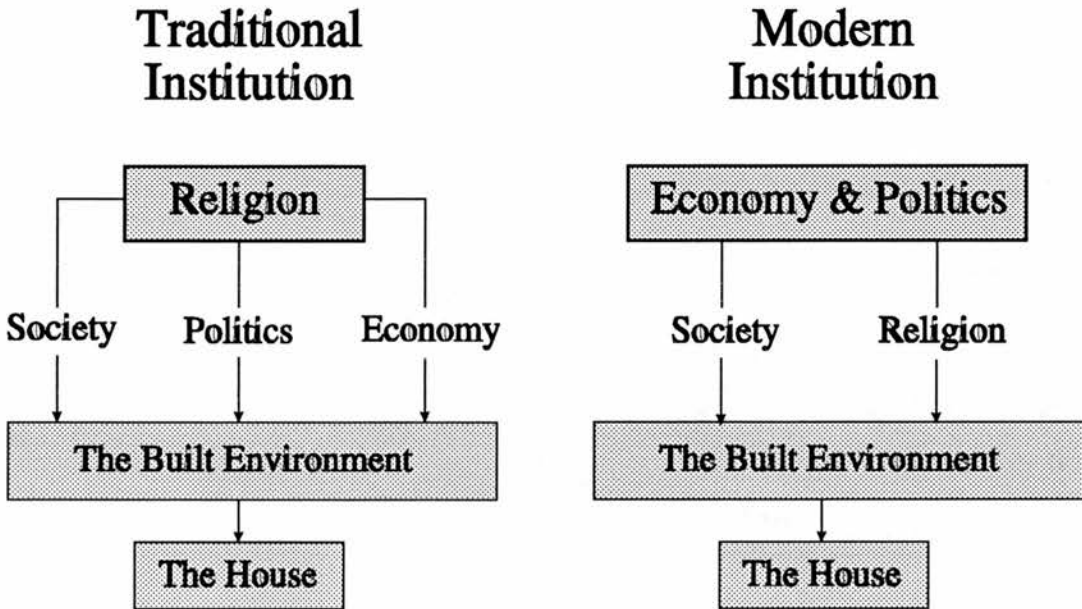


Fig. 2.2. Basis of traditional and modern social institutions.

Islam neither forbids progress nor hinders it. Islam, to which the traditional Ḥedjāzīs have always turned to for identity, has ceased lately to be unitary, just because modern Ḥedjāzīs have chosen not to adhere to it any more. Ironically, Islam has a highly developed legal and social code of behaviour that prescribes how the Muslim is to conduct his life within the community to the utmost details, to the extent of making some foreign observers describe Islam as very much a religion of the community, not of the individual. Perhaps 'the maintenance of the traditional Islamic values' is an imprecise prescription, because what is needed in Ḥedjāz is a revival of these Islamic values to assure the new generations of architects that only religion can provide the answers for most of their problems, as Thesiger puts it "*All that is best in the Arabs has come to them from the desert.*"<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Wilfred Thesiger (1940): cited in Thomas, Bertram. The Arabs. London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1937. 47.

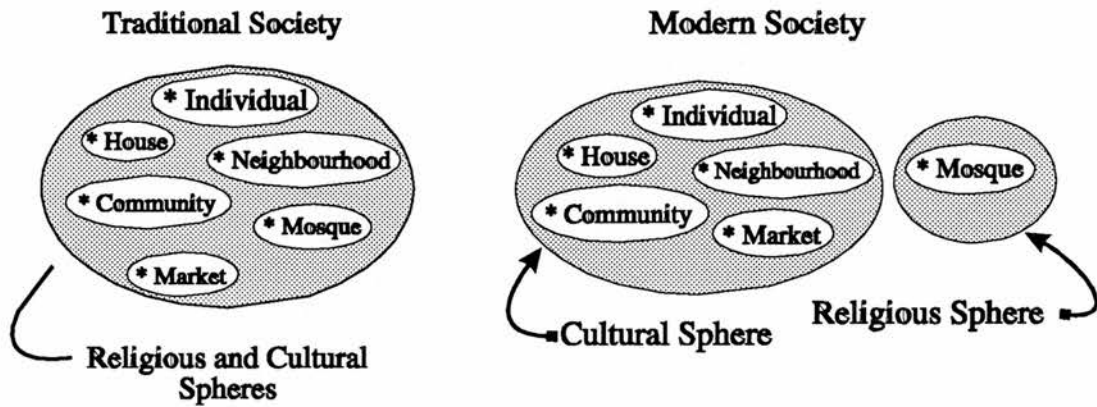


Fig. 2.3. Fragmentation of the traditional unity of life.

This chapter (and chapter one) represent the first step of a cultural and architectural study and not merely a collection of historical descriptions of the Ḥedjāz region. The whole exercise stemmed from a need to confront the effects of the dramatic changes that accompanied the economic growth of the region. The felt need was, essentially to strike a balance between requirements of rapid growth and the presentation of the authentic character of Saudi Arabian cities and their Islamic cultural heritage. This study calls for a major cultural revival, the roots of which lie in the continuity of a national cultural heritage. The contribution to this heritage is guaranteed to offer a great deal to the modern Ḥedjāzīs. In this revival, which seeks to link the present with the past, and while admitting the innovations of modern mankind and the contribution of science, it is appropriate to pause to contemplate on our own cultural heritage, and point the way towards a culturally-based future, otherwise our heritage will be lost forever we will have gained nothing worthwhile in exchange.

The study of the house context in both chapters one and two was mainly carried out to reveal these external differences, along with their causes, so as to clear the stage for a discussion of the socio-cultural bases rooted in the physical form of the house. Since these cultural bases were translated by the locals (clients and builders) into the physical forms seen today, it was obvious to start the investigation by looking into them rather than the building itself. Besides, learning the basic facts about the circumstances that surrounded the process of producing the traditional Ḥedjāzī house (i.e., its context), supports the following chapters and allows a better understanding

of the phenomenon of the traditional house - or houses in general for that matter - in a more determined direction.

As a continuation of this process, the next chapter is a historical and ethnographical study of how and why families in Hedjāzī towns and cities have appropriated their man-made spaces (in ways which can be retraced and observed). The chapter focuses upon the culturally, socially and temporally defined meanings and uses of architectural space with respect to specific social structures, behavioural patterns, and religious and traditional beliefs. The peculiarities of the traditional Hedjāzī family and its structure as a social institution are investigated in chapters three, five, seven, eight and ten in terms of its needs, and its capability to meet these needs. All are evaluated against their production of the house. Also some of the most intricate socio-cultural moral values, world views and codes of ethics that the traditional Hedjāzī society and its builders lived in accordance to are discussed in a number of these chapters.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE HOUSE IN TRADITIONAL ḤEDJĀZ

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE HOUSE IN TRADITIONAL ḤEDJĀZ

---

#### Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to recreate an image of a typical Ḥedjāzī house built between the 18th and early 20th centuries. This recreation pertains to the patterns of life that evolved about the domain of the house, that is the house and its immediate environment whether it is a *zūqāq* (alley), a *ḥāra/maḥallah* (a residential quarter, a neighbourhood or a community), or a *sūq* (market place). Analysing the urban and architectural traditions of Ḥedjāz also requires a brief description of some aspects of the social life to support an overall assessment of the interdependence of the physical and cultural environments of the region at that time.

The first objective of this analysis is to study the components of the traditional Ḥedjāzī *ḥāra* and its various elements; the house, mosque, market and alleyways, in an attempt to capture the feeling of the urban environment in which the traditional house emerged. This study also supplies the means by which an extrapolation of the general outdoor living patterns in Ḥedjāz could be reached. The second objective is to define the components of the house in Ḥedjāz. A generic plan(s) of what a typical Ḥedjāzī house required in order to function and serve the various cultural, physical, and spiritual needs of its residents is constructed. This study is essential for the development of the following chapters dealing with the building profession in Ḥedjāz (builders and craftsmen, building materials and construction methods) until the concluding picture of the Ḥedjāzī house is completed. The third objective is to produce an overall view of the relation between the house and the family on the one level, and the relation between the neighbourhood and the larger community on the other. Here, an examination of the process through which the general living patterns were carried out in their reconstructed sequence, manners, and hierarchy of organization within and outside the house is reviewed.

### 3.1. The physical morphology of Hedjāzī towns

#### 3.1.1. The urban fabric of traditional Hedjāzī towns

The urban form of Hedjāzī towns until the 1950s - as with all indigenous towns and villages - evolved in strong correlation with the cultural norms and values of their inhabitants. A mutually supportive relationship between the social and the physical worlds led, through time, to a distinctive urban form and to continuity of the culture. The *Hedjāziyyīn* (people of Hedjāz), through centuries of successive external influences, were able to bridge cultural gaps and absorb most differences between their world and that of their ancestors, consolidated both worlds into a purposeful social system, which was capable of maintaining their cultural progression.

Like most Muslim cities of the Middle East - and especially those which came under the Ottoman influence like Cairo, Iraq and Syria - the structure of the Hedjāzī town consisted of two main sections which differed in size and variety of functions from one town to the other: a

commercial centre (*sūq*), where international trade was concentrated in the principal caravansaries (*khān*, *wikālah* or *funduq*), and residential quarters (*ḥārāt*, *maḥellāt*). From this centre radiated a number of major arteries leading to the residential quarters. These took the form of concentric zones radiating away from the public commercial sector. The further one got from the centre, the less crowded and specialized the activities became (Fig. 3.1.).

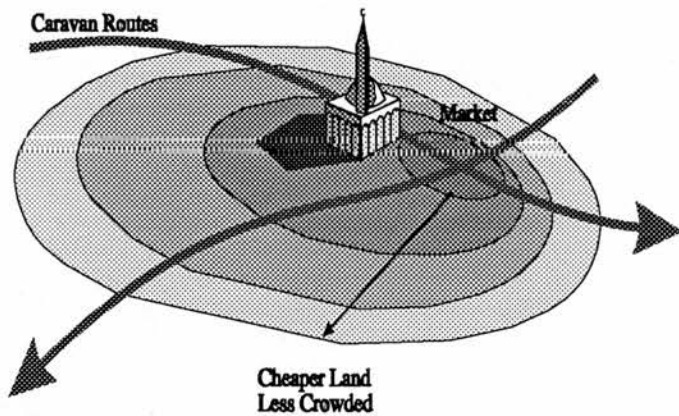


Fig. 3.1. Layout of Middle Eastern towns under the Ottomans.

Merchants and rich residents had financial means to put up residences near the centre where land was dear, and these resulted in a layout of successive rings, with the wealthiest part of the population residing near the centre, while the poor lived some distance away close to the town walls. This pattern was later - towards the

1950s - modified again by the rich who chose to live in districts well away from the busy centre where space was available for their large mansions, thus allowing them to lodge relatives and servants.

Residential quarters were connected with a principal network of town streets by one of the main arteries (*darb, shāri', or ṭarīq*) and were served by a hierarchal organization of smaller streets (*ḥāra, zūqāq*) usually ending in cul-de-sacs (*ḥārāt sadd, barahāt*). These quarters formed units each with a defined 'social boundary' (unlike Egypt, Syria, and other Islamic regions, the residential quarters of Ḥedjāz were not protected by walls and gates which could be closed at night). These residential quarters were placed under the authority of elder wise men (*sheikh* or '*omdah*') who were able to exercise effective control over the entire population of the *ḥāra* by public consensus. Traffic flow was mainly pedestrian and oriented to and from the commercial centre where the market and the mosque (*masdjed, jami'*) were placed<sup>1</sup>.

The following are the main elements of a typical Ḥedjāzī town. The scale of the urban setting and its components described here are much smaller than that of other major cultural centres of the Middle East like Cairo, Aleppo or Damascus as discussed later in this chapter. Moreover, the form and general layout of these elements - although very closely related - were not identical all over the towns of Ḥedjāz.

### 3.1.1.1. *Ḥāra, Maḥallah* (Residential quarter)

In traditional Ḥedjāz, the *ḥāra* was a complete social unit with which people identified strongly. For a long period, it was an important social and urban unit. The physical environment of the *ḥāra* and the relationship between the private and public domains, in which the daily activities of the residents took place, are important bases for understanding the familial relations among the residents of the *ḥāra*. This was a manifestation of a certain way of life which was prevalent in traditional times. With the impact of different forces of social, political, economical and demographic change that took place in the middle of the twentieth century, various old usages of the different physical spaces were abandoned; others were retained and new ones were

---

<sup>1</sup> See Raymond, André. The Great Arab Cities In The 16th and 18th Century: An Introduction. New York: New York University Press, 1984. 17-30.





added. These are discussed in later chapters. This process of change and adaptation has resulted in the current pattern of use and organization of public and private spaces in the Hedjāzī *ḥāra*.

The physical evidence and historical descriptions of the traditional Hedjāzī residential quarters presented in chapter one indicate that a large number of family-houses, usually fifty to eighty, clustered around a street and constituted a *ḥāra* (Fig. 3.2.). Each *ḥāra* contained, apart from houses (with shops on their ground floors), a main mosque, a square adjacent to it where the weekly market took place, and a number of smaller mosques called *zāwiyyah*.



Fig. 3.2. A typical layout of a Hedjāzī *ḥāra*

Like an extended family, the *ḥāra* of the Hedjāzī town grew and developed on the basis of communities interacting as parts of a larger whole and not on the basis of pre-planned land sub-divisions. Houses were developed according to a notion of shared territoriality among the neighbouring family-houses, with no physical or visual barriers between these houses. These territories were respected by everybody in the *ḥāra*. Strangers were not prevented from passing through the *ḥāra*, but were not permitted to loiter in the area. The relatively small size of these *ḥārāt* (*n.sing. ḥāra*) helped in creating a greater sense of intimacy among the families. A sense of a community led to the enhancement of the *ḥāra's* social integration which was clearly reflected in the architecture and the layout of residential areas.

### 3.1.1.2. *Sūq* (Market-place)

The Ḥedjāzī towns - again like other cultural centres of the Middle East - depended on commercial activities for their livelihood in one way or another, hence, the market place was always considered as a major urban centre and the busiest place in the town. Historically, the *sūq* was a large square joined with a mosque, for the merchandise-carrying caravans to settle either daily, weekly or monthly, depending on the trading season. It was also composed of a series of smaller *aswāq* (*n.sing. sūq*) connected to one another by alleyways.

The market place fulfilled a variety of social functions that went beyond the purpose of trading, all of which consolidated the social network of the *ḥāra* and added to the strength of the community. Habits, values and norms of expected and accepted behaviour were learnt at home at very early stages of individuals' lives. Then they were refined by religious beliefs and values taught in the mosque, and then later practised in the market. For although these *aswāq* consisted of shops and stores of varied trades, they were mainly the centre of the Ḥedjāzī's social life and the outdoor world of men - where they practised their commerce in their shops and offices. The presence of a coffee house (*qahwa*) for business meetings and recreational activities was always a must. The strong relation between the market, the mosque, and the school (*madrasah*), meant that the market functioned as an educational and religious centre.

### 3.1.1.3. *Masdjed, Jāmi'* (Mosque)

Crowded markets and residential quarters were assembled around the mosque, shared and benefited from its role in the community: physically, socially and spiritually. As a centre for religious activities, the mosque in Ḥedjāz was the main focal point of the urban tissue. Makkah and Al-Madinah were the two towns of Ḥedjāz with a distinct religious significance, therefore the two Grand Mosques of these towns played a larger role in the formation of their urban fabric.

In a typical neighbourhood, the *jāmi'* was a Friday congregational mosque which provided a larger meeting place for the men in the quarter, while the smaller mosques - *zawāiyyā* (*n.sing. zāwiyyah*) - functioned as the local meeting place of the

heads of the families living nearest to it. The position of the *'imām* (n.pl. *a'immah*) who leads the prayer was often granted to the oldest qualified men of the quarter.

In general, the mosque was a dominant urban and architectural feature, accentuating the skyline of the town. Often a tall white-washed minaret provided a landmark for each quarter. The traditional mosque of Ḥedjāz lacked the dome and was attached with a single minaret. Most of these mosques had a *ṣaḥn* or *ḥoush* (courtyard) with a water-source for ablution. Tales of historians<sup>2</sup> asserted that although most of these mosques were built by the Ottoman authorities, their representatives, foreign and native merchants, there was a tendency to avoid overt symbolism in their architecture typical of the Ottoman's administration.

#### 3.1.1.4. *Shawāri'*, *Aziqqah*, *Dorūb* (Pedestrian and traffic network)

All Ḥedjāzī towns were truly pedestrian. The main modes of transportation were horses, mules and donkeys - mounted directly or pulling wooden two or four-wheeled carts (the first motor car was introduced by the representative of the Ottoman authority in Makkah in the beginning of the 1920s)<sup>3</sup>. The major road-networks radiated out from a central focal point of its specific locality. For example, in Jeddah, the focal point was the sea, while in Makkah and in Al-Madinah the Holy Mosques were the focal points. These roads led to a labyrinthine of unpaved, narrow and irregular alleys, which in turn led to even smaller walkways and cul-de-sacs, adding to the overall atmosphere of the *ḥāra*. The width of streets were thus measured by the ability of two loaded camels or donkeys to pass one another adequately (sometimes these were as narrow as two meters and as wide as 14 meters). In the narrow alleyways between houses, where animal traffic was not expected, the width was measured by the ability of house owners to swing open their doors and windows freely. These lanes were so narrow that the cantilevered wooden balconies of some houses were so close to one another, that it was easy for women to hold a group discussion, each sitting in her own *rowshān* without being seen from the outside.

---

<sup>2</sup> Like al-Maghrabī, M. 'Alī. *Malāmiḥ el Ḥayāh al Edjtimā'īyyah Fī al Ḥedjāz*. [(Arabic) "Aspects of the Ḥedjāzī social life."] Jeddah: Tihamah, 1982; al-Anṣārī, 'Abdul Qudūs. *Mausū'at Tārīkh Madīnat Jeddah*. [(Arabic) The Encyclopedia of the History of the City of Jeddah]. Cairo: Dar Miṣr Lilṭibā'ah, 1982. (First published 1963); Burckhardt (1829); Burton (1855); al-Siba'ī, Aḥmad. *Tarīq Makkah*. 2nd ed. Makkah: Dār Quraish Press, 1960. *Passim*.

<sup>3</sup> See al-Anṣārī, 1982. 571.

Streets and alleyways although not paved, were kept clean, for they were considered, in a social sense, the extension of the house front. Residents were eager to sweep and sprinkle their front streets. The outdoor *jalsah* (meeting) of the male members of each family would be held on the *maṣṭabah* (n.pl. *maṣāṭib* = sitting platforms) at the front of these houses, hence the association of cleanliness with the house owners was obvious. A large number of household activities which are today restricted to the physical setting of the house, used to take place in the alley. For instance, these alleys were used for socializing with neighbours, receiving guests, playing games, and for the preparation of wedding ceremonies.

Lighting in these lanes was achieved by means of oil-lamps which were held by brackets at every street corner. They were lit and maintained by the *'asas* (n.sing. *'asah* = night watchman). Door fronts were lit privately by home owners, the number of lamps on a certain front being an indication of the wealth of the family (lighting oil was expensive in those days).

Naṣīf<sup>4</sup> reported that, in the heat of the summer, members of low income families - who did not have access to roof terraces - used to sleep in the *ḥāra* alley by their door step. It was also reported that not much difference was noticed between what men wore inside the house and in the *ḥāra* alley, unless they were leaving the *ḥāra* to another place. The manners and forms of familiarity with which various intimate activities were carried out in the *ḥāra* makes it evident that the alley was actually considered by its residents as their private domain. This mode of behaviour indicates an extension of the familiarity of the relationship within the house itself to members of the *ḥāra* as a whole. In such an atmosphere, the so called 'privacy of the family' and 'privacy of the house' were extremely relative concepts, except when the position of the women of the house was considered.

### 3.2. The physical morphology of the Ḥedjāzī house

Documentation of the traditional houses of Makkah, Al-Madinah and Jeddah, along with the analysis of existing buildings in these cities helped in constructing the

---

<sup>4</sup> Naṣīf, Ḥusain. *Māḍī al Ḥedjāz wa Ḥadīruh*. [(Arabic) "Ḥedjāz Past and Present] Cairo" (n.p.) 1931 (n. pag.).

range of changing form and meaning of Ḥedjāzī domestic architecture over the past 300 years. Within this period, I discerned two sub-periods salient for builders and inhabitants which also manifested in house forms. These sub-periods emerged from the interviews (which are discussed in the following chapter) and reflected the builder's sense of time. These periods provide the context for other findings which are discussed later in the thesis.

The first period - from the late 1600s to the middle 1800s - is the earliest time for which we can clear up any information about houses, either from oral accounts or from securely dated existing buildings. During that time, Ḥedjāz was part of the Ottoman empire, and a small Turkish and Egyptian minority lived with the predominantly Ḥedjāzī population. The second period - from the late 1800s until the middle 1900s - was a time of relatively faster change which included the unification of the Kingdom, the growth of the oil companies, and the increasing identification with the Western world. It could be concluded that in the first period, primarily non-local sources (mainly Egyptian, Syrian and Yemeni) inspired or stimulated 'stylistic' change in Ḥedjāz. The second period included a wider range of foreign influences from both east and west of Arabia (e.g., Indian)<sup>5</sup>. There is also a notable degree of status consciousness expressed in the houses of this period.

The traditional houses of Ḥedjāz belonged to two groups<sup>6</sup>: the first was that of houses built during the early 17th and late 18th centuries. These were a combination of simple west Arabian, cube-like three-roomed stone shack (much like the small houses of the island of Sawakin which are shown later in this chapter), and the elaborate house built during the Turkish domination of the region. These were relatively simple and small houses. The second group was that of houses built during late 19th and early 20th centuries. Those were refined Turkish-influenced houses, yet showing greater influences of the Mamluk and Ottoman houses of Cairo that are

---

<sup>5</sup> Beyond these two periods, inspirations for prestigious visual forms were derived from Western Europe and the United States, and less from Africa and Asia where economic and cultural ties had been maintained for centuries. These new sources of influence and changes anticipated and accommodated the new political, economic and cultural order that followed the incorporation of the Ḥedjāz into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the 1930s.

<sup>6</sup> This is a belief that is supported by evident found in the Island of Sawakin (the opposite side of the Red Sea). Houses there were built and owned by families from Egypt, Jeddah and Makkah). Ḥedjāzī people started to settle in Sawakin as early as the 1400s. See Greenlaw, Jean-Pierre. The Coral Buildings of Suakin. London: Knight and Foster Ltd., 1976. *Passim*.



presented later in the chapter. These were more complex, had more spaces, more wall elements, elaborate façade treatment and decorations. There is, however, a great deal of overlap between the two groups since the Turkish influence is obvious in both cases. The Turkish and Egyptian presence was always felt in Ḥedjāz - directly and indirectly in both periods - whether by Mamluk Cairene or by Ottoman Cairene house types. In his book about the island of Sawakin, Greenlaw asserts that the oldest houses in the island - related to the first group - were owned by merchant families from Jeddah<sup>7</sup>. Those houses, which Greenlaw believed to be from the 16th and 17th centuries, were in the same tradition as Makkah and Al-Madinah.

It should be recognized here that craftsmen-built or individually-designed houses were neither universal nor necessarily general throughout the second period. There were also self-built houses occupied by low-income families and were known as *al-shukkoll' 'ushash* (Fig. 3.3.)<sup>8</sup>. These were constructed with walls of wooden posts

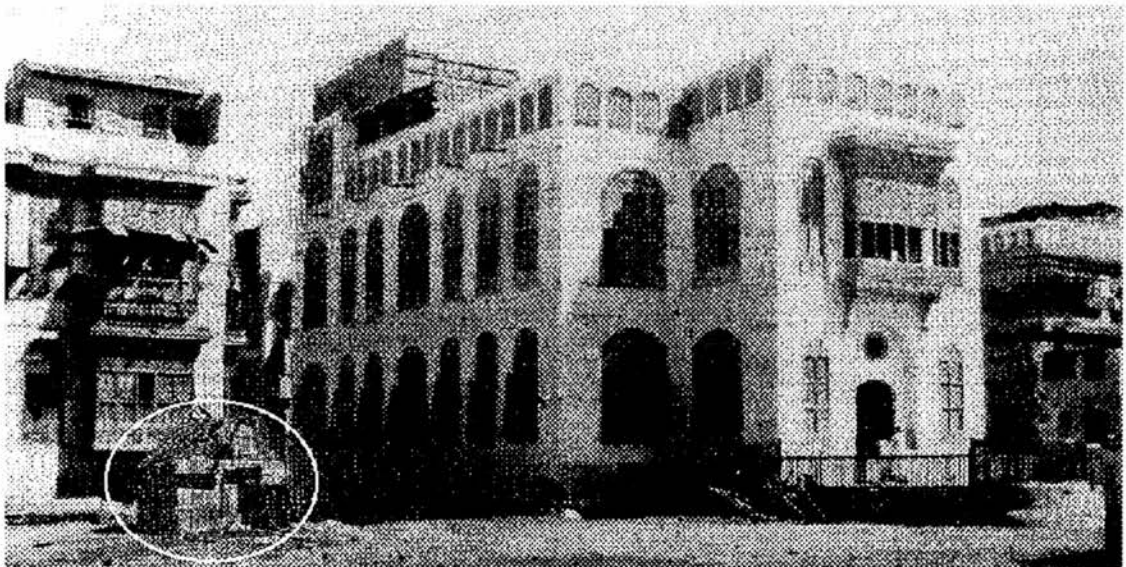


Fig. 3.3. *al-Shukkoll' 'ushash* in front of a *sarāyah*.

<sup>7</sup> The Turks dominated Sawakin from 1516 onwards. Most of the houses in the Island may date from this period. From 1865 onwards, the Egyptians took over the Island and built relatively large houses from the same coral blocks and wooden elements, but of a Cairene Ottoman manner. Some of those houses were elaborately documented by Greenlaw, hence, it is still possible to analyze such housing types based on the houses of Sawakin.

<sup>8</sup> Source: El-Hage, Badr. Images from the Past: Saudi Arabia. (Arabic). London: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1989. 111.

or pillars called *rodoff* and made of *akhshāb jandal/qandal* (Indian wood) and *nakhīl al-dūm* (doum-Palm) shipped in from the Sudan. Additionally, there were small dwellings made out of mud and palm-leaf stalks owned or rented by non-Ḥedjāzī settlers<sup>9</sup>. Such housing does not, however, lie within the scope of this research<sup>10</sup>. Descriptions of houses or the methods of building them featured in this research are based on those constructed by specialist builders - *mu'allemin* - from mud, stones or coral blocks. It is this traditional type with which we are therefore concerned.

This type took two forms, or was rather represented in two sizes: the more typical *sha'bi* or 'public/ordinary' house; and the relatively larger house or *sarāiyah* (Turkish/Ḥedjāzī for large house). These two categories were basically very similar, except that larger houses involved foreign craftsmen and building features, used richer materials, required elaborate building techniques, and sometimes planned layouts (i.e., intended symmetry, following certain architectural styles like the Ottoman Cairene). These had wider elevations, more floors and large long *rawāshīn* (bay-windows). Some of these houses were built larger and larger towards the 20th century and were characterized by their symmetrical layouts and division into smaller apartments for married sons.

The morphology of the Ḥedjāzī house consisted of two distinguishable parts: the main body of the building which was made of stone or coral blocks, and the wooden fixtures like the doors and windows (Fig. 3.4.). With its large openings, the Ḥedjāzī house actually stood as a frame skeleton rather than the massive heavy walled building it appears to be. Whether attached or free-standing, it was a simple and straight forward rectangular cube, with wooden elements clad to it. Any deviation from this was due to the irregularity of the site and conditions of the neighbouring buildings as discussed in chapter six. Set-backs were not the requirements of any regulations but rather for the provision of *asṭuḥ/khardjāt* (n.sing. *suṭūḥ* or *khardjah* = roof-top terraces) for the upper floors. Rooms were never forced to take a particular form beyond the natural shape of local building materials. Desired articulations in the

---

<sup>9</sup> For example, the black African community known as *Nakatū*. These existed outside the city walls of Jeddah until its removal in 1947 AD/1367 AH by a Royal decree by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud.

<sup>10</sup> Nor do the reinforced concrete buildings which were known locally as *ashmonī* (the first of which was built in Jeddah in 1929 AD/1348 AH but which were not preferred by the traditional community until some years later) or apartment buildings (the first of which was built by the National Commercial Bank in 1932 AD/1351 AH in the heart of Jeddah).



final shape of the house were added later and were achieved by additional wooden elements. The result was a simple form with highly elaborate applied articulations using wood, especially on the façade level.

Al-Maghrabī mentions that a medium sized house (accommodating up to three families) in Ḥedjāz would cost around 300-400 Golden English Pounds  $\approx$  4000 *riyāl madjīdī*  $\approx$  £  $\pm$  15.400 today's value<sup>11</sup>, while the total cost of building a large multi-family house (accommodating up to six families) reached an amount of 1000-1500 Golden English Pounds  $\approx$  15000 *riyāl madjīdī*  $\approx$  £  $\pm$  57.750 today's value<sup>12</sup>. Those who were not financially capable of buying nor renting such accommodations would rent one *madjlis* (*n.pl. madjālis* = reception suite) only from a large house at an average cost of about £  $\pm$  0.43 monthly. An average three to four story house required an average of four to five years to build. Additions to the house were considered as changes in the number of the family members increased over such a span of time. The whole process meant that the house was actually *born* with the family and *grew* with it in the true sense of the word - indicating the synonymy between house and family. Every house in Ḥedjāz bore the name of the extended family occupying it. The extended family arrangement was one of the main reasons for the construction of the relatively large traditional houses of Ḥedjāz. Chapters five, six, seven and eight deal with these issues in more detail.

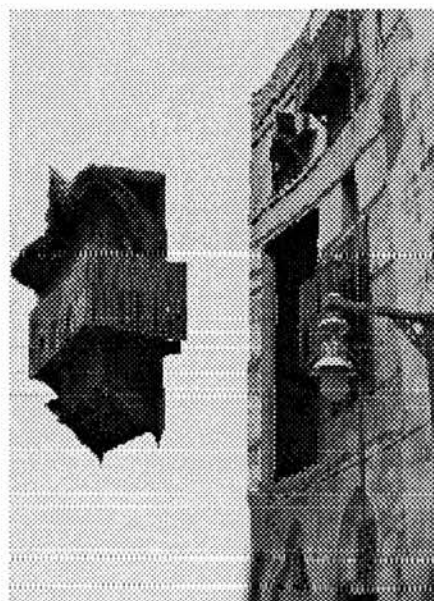


Fig. 3.4. The main parts of the house.

<sup>11</sup> The monetary units used under the Turks were *Riyal Madjīdī* (Turkish crown = silver riyal  $\approx$  25 of today's Saudi riyal  $\approx$  £ 3.8 today), *Sharak* or *Jinah* *Jordj* which was a British half crown or guinea bearing the image of St. George (seven to ten silver riyal  $\approx$  250 Saudi riyal  $\approx$  £ 38.5 today's value). A guinea according to the Webster's Dictionary of the Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., (London, 1981) is an English gold coin issued from 1663 to 1813 and fixed in 1717 as the equivalent of 21 shillings. It was equivalent to 22 karat from which guineas were coined. A guinea also refers to the Saudi Arabian sovereign which was first issued in 1951.

<sup>12</sup> Large houses would cost about 1000 golden Egyptian pounds. These figures are confirmed by the master builders of Ḥedjāz (as well as the accounts of the Begum of Bhopal presented in chapter six). See Sikandar, *The Begum of Bhopal: The Nawab. A Pilgrimage to Mecca*. Calcutta: thacker Spink & Co., 1906. 29-31.

### 3.3. Components of typical Ḥedjāzī houses

A typical traditional Ḥedjāzī house would consist of a number of floors, depending on its locality. Each floor was assigned certain functions suitable to its position in the house, and the socio-cultural meaning associated with its spatial organization - an issue which is discussed in more details later in the research. The following section aims at the analysis of the major characteristics and components of typical houses in the three major Ḥedjāzī cities (Makkah, Al-Madinah, and Jeddah). Naturally, not all of these components existed at the same time in one house in a particular city. For example, because of the hilly nature of the Makkan topography, it is quite difficult to find a typical floor plan, yet the components of the house and their distribution in most cases would be similar. This section is followed by reconstructing a generic typical house from the city of Jeddah.

#### 3.3.1. Subterranean level

Most Ḥedjāzī houses had a *qabū* (*n.pl. aqbiyyah* = cool vaulted-rooms), a *ṣehrīdj* (*n.pl. ṣahārīdj* = water-tanks), a *baiyyārah/dabil* (*n.pl. baiyyārāt/dibūl* = septic-tanks) and, probably, a *makhzan* (*n.pl. makhāzen* = storage-room).

#### 3.3.2. Ground floor/Lower floors

Ground floors of Ḥedjāzī houses usually consisted of a *madkhal* (*n.pl. madākhil* = entrance), a *dihlīz/dehlīz* (*n.pl. dahālīz* = entrance-hall, lobby), a *daradj* (staircase), a *maq'ad* (*n.pl. maqā'id* = sitting-room) with a *rowshān* for guest reception, sleeping and sitting, and a *makhzan*. In most cases, a *merḥāḍ* or *ṭahārah* (*n.pl. marāḥīḍ, ṭahārāt* = latrine) was provided near the entrance-hall. According to the locality, additional rooms were added while others were omitted (e.g., *dīwān* = entrance-hall, sitting-room, and a *qā'ah* = hall in Al-Madinah). (*n.b.*, when such a case occurs, the locality will be specified). A *finā'*, *ḥoush* were outdoor enclosed spaces or courtyards typical of Makkah and Al-Madinah.

### 3.3.2.1. *Bāb al-madkhal* (Entrance, doorway)

There were usually two entrances to a house, one for men and the other for women. There were also, in some cases, two different staircases, one for each gender. On the outside of the men's entrance, there was a 50-70 cm raised sitting platform built of mud, earth or stone called a *maṣṭabah*. This was used for socializing with neighbours and passers-by, and for the gathering of men in the afternoon.

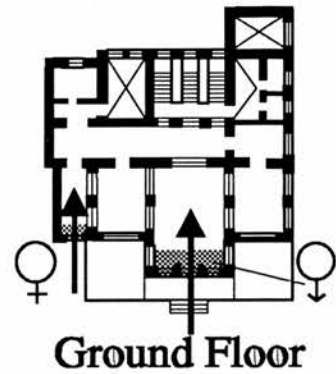


Fig. 3.5. *al-Madkhal*.

### 3.3.2.2. *Dihlīz* (Entrance-hall, lobby)

This was a bent entrance hall next to the main entrance of the house. This transitional area worked as a buffer between the public and private areas, carrying out the function of privacy, breaking down of dusty winds, and allowing cross ventilation through the house. In most cases it was a spacious hall providing a reception area for guests. The *dihlīz* was paved with flag-stones with benches along side the *dihlīz* for sitting and reception purposes. In summer, the *dihlīz* would be sprinkled with water to keep it cool.

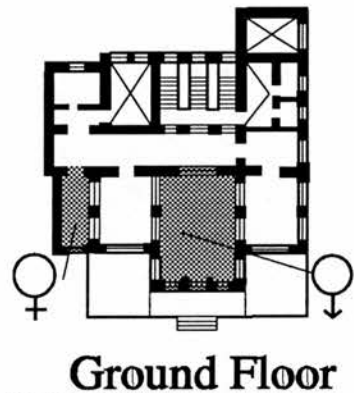


Fig. 3.6. *al-Dihlīz*.

### 3.3.2.3 *Daradj, sullam* (Staircase)

The staircase was usually located to the far end of the house, separated from the entrance by a corridor or an antechamber. It was constructed of coral blocks or stones. Every step was built of stone, plastered and protected at the front edge by a long, five by five centimetres, wooden log called *farshah*, laid on top of three long wooden *naglat* (sticks). The staircase usually opened to a *manwar* (n.pl.

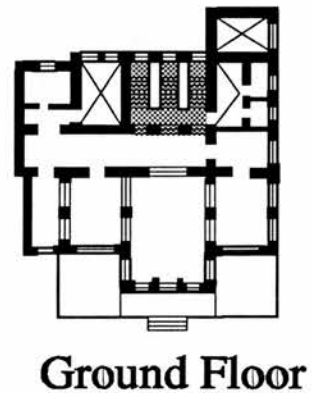


Fig. 3.7. *al-Daradj*.

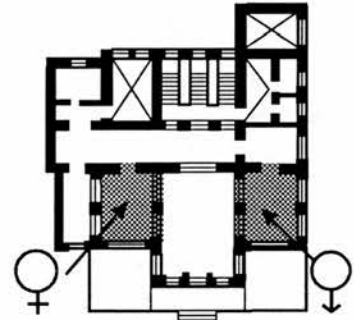
*manāwer* = air/light-shaft) which was constructed as the core of the overall structure of the house. About four landings of stairs would be constructed from the ground floor leading to upper floors of the house. The staircase - as mentioned later in the research - was considered by the house builders as a very important element of the house. Not only did its construction represent a test of the builders' skills, it was also used to protect their livelihood. To the house owners, the protection of the privacy of upper floors was a priority that the staircase had to provide for.

#### 3.3.2.4. *Digaisī* (storage space)

Although it was found in Jeddah, this space was most common in Makkah and Al-Madinah for the storage of coal and other hardware. It was located in the upper part of the staircase and was usually concealed as an attic or a mock ceiling<sup>13</sup>.

#### 3.3.2.5. *Maq 'ad* (Sitting-room)<sup>14</sup>

This was a relatively large sitting room (or rooms) adjacent to or on both sides of the entrance (*dihlīz*). It is also possible to find *maqā'id* in upper floors depending on the size of the house and status of residents. It was frequently used as a business office for intimate male friends, a casual reception for men, and a guest sleeping place as well as the servants quarters. They were also used as sleeping areas during hot afternoons and for storing merchandise. *Al-maq'ad* was equipped - in larger houses - with a kitchenette for making tea and coffee. These would have 'mobile' ovens known as *kawānīn* (*n.sing. kānūn* = stoves). *Maqā'id* had built-in recessed wall shelves for storing utensils, books and other light objects, they were known as *kimār* (*n.sing. kamar*). These were then



**Ground Floor**

Fig. 3.8. *al-Maq'ad*.

<sup>13</sup> In the course of interviews with some Ḥedjāzī families - introduced later in the research - this room is said to have been invented so as to hide the expensive goods of the house from the Turkish tax collectors.

<sup>14</sup> Until the end of the 18th century, this room was known as *al-dīwān* in Makkah and Jeddah.

‘closed’ with cloth or paper drapes to protect the objects stored inside them from dust and to visually enhance their appearance<sup>15</sup>.

In the *maq‘ad*, there were one or two *rawāshīn* (n.sing. *rowshān* = bay-windows) overlooking the street. Inside them was a raised platform (50 cm) covered with cotton-stuffed pillows and mattresses (*turfah*) and a carpet. The seating arrangement in the *maq‘ad* would take the form of a peripheral position of *turāḥah*, *baṭermah* (mattresses) on which the guests would squat, with an option of leaning to the wall behind them. The *makhaddāt*, *masānid* (cushions) would be voluntarily used by those who would like a back-support (Fig. 3.9.)<sup>16</sup>. Wooden or cane and bamboo decks were provided on the *maq‘ad* for the head of the house and his male guests.

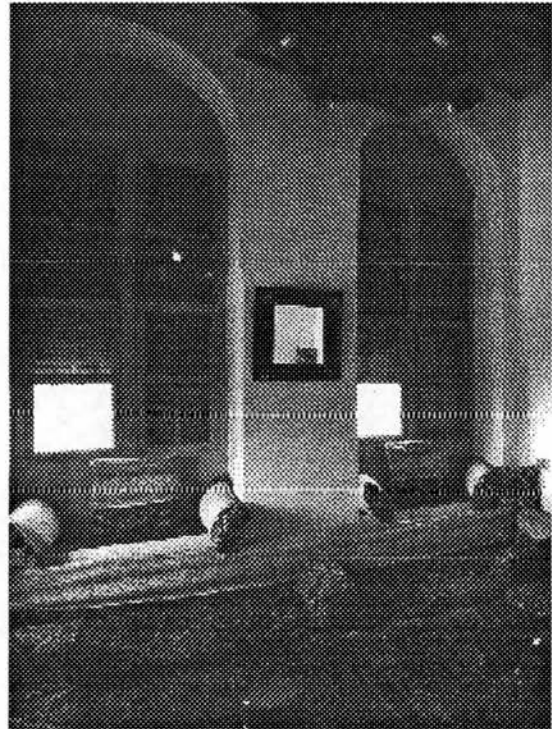


Fig. 3.9. The alcove of the *rawāshīn*.

Although chairs (*karāsī* = wooden or bamboo chairs) and *dikkāk*, *karāwīt* or *marākīz* (high wooden seats) were not common in Ḥedjāz until the late 19th century, people never sat directly on the ground or on a bare floor. There were always rugs, mats and skins for this purpose. These were spread on floors and raised platforms known as *karāwītah* (n.pl. *karāwīt*) - everyone walked barefoot. Floors were furnished with *busoṭ al-khasaf al-takronī* (African palm-straw mats) upon which imported Persian carpets *wadjāhāt*<sup>17</sup> (lit. notability, prestige) were laid to protect them from dust, add thickness to floor-seating and as an insulator from

<sup>15</sup> Horizontal surfaces of wall protrusions and cavities were invariably draped with a decorative cloth and shelves edged with crocket-web known as *danādīsh*.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Aba Al-Khail, Abdul Aziz. Description of Arabic Majlis in Qur'an and Prophet Tradition (Sunnah). Al-benna. Vol. 7: 38, Dec/Jan. 1987/1988. 15.

<sup>17</sup> These were so called because they were highly visible in the absence of furniture, hence they became significant visual elements of the house.



heat and cold. Every room was treated as a 'large couch' where one could sit wherever he desired.

### 3.3.2.6. *Rowshān, Mashrābiyyah, Ṭāḡah, Shīsh* (Bay-windows, sitting-balconies, windows, blinds and shutters)

*Rowshān* - a Persian word meaning 'bright' - was an extension of the inner space of the family living quarters to the exterior of the house. These *rawāshīn* were elevated seating and sleeping places protruding from the building's façade by means of a latticed-wooden structure. They were the most expensive element on the traditional façade, all made of teak wood. They were adorned with intricately patterned panels, shutters, eaves and cornices. *Rawāshīn* received the breeze and prevailing winds from three directions because of their projection and their relatively large size (a *rowshān* was usually wide enough for two persons to sleep in, and high enough for them to stand in<sup>18</sup>). These ledges were topped with cotton-stuffed mattress, usually covered with a Persian rug and surrounded with cotton-stuffed cushions (Fig. 3.9.). This cool alcove, with in-flowing refreshing breezes, was then used to entertain close friends and relatives. Inside the top of the *rowshān*, there was a groove for an oil lamp to be fixed. In large rooms, these lamps would be found hanging in the centre from a hook, or dangling at the top of a dividing arch. Portable oil lamps were placed on niches in the wall of the used room, the sides of a *mashrābiyyah*, near the *madkhal* or half way up the *daradj*.

It is a misconception that the *rowshān* represented only the traditional alternative for a window. The reason for this is the presence of several other functions that are attributed to it; on the one hand the seating place in the *rowshān* was differentiated from the diverse sitting place in the house by the local verb '*rawshen*' (to sit in the *rowshān*). On the other hand this ledge or elevated place in the *rowshān* was also used to place earthen pot containers of water; these clay pots being porous were constantly wet on the outside and their location on these ledges exposed them to air currents, leading to evaporation, thus achieving maximum coolness. For this very reason we find that the term *rowshān* in Egypt does not exist, and instead the

---

<sup>18</sup> The usual dimensions of a typical *rowshān* were three meters in height, 2.3 meters in width, and 1.1 meter in depth, to allow sufficient space for at least one sleeping adult.

term *mashrābiyyah* (which literally means a place for drinking)<sup>19</sup> is used instead. These *rawāshīn* were the dominant external elements of design in multi-story houses of Ḥedjāz. The *rowshān* served a number of immediate functions: to enhance the architectural character of the building (being very expensive, they were also pieces of display and distinction), to improve the ventilation of the interior, and to use as a private observation deck.

A cheaper version of the expensive *rowshān* were adjustable blinds or shutters called *shīsh*, an Egyptian term and invention (Fig. 3.10.). For poor households who could not afford the *rowshān*, the *shīsh* was a relatively simple alternative of small wooden-balconies with latticed-screens serving the same functions of the *rowshān*. The *shīsh* was only attached to the façade from the exterior and did not provide the interior alcove. The arrangement of the *rawāshīn* or *shīshān* in the exterior façade of the building was determined by the interior layout of the house and by other aesthetic considerations. It is nearly impossible to find two identical *rawāshīn* in the whole of Ḥedjāz. Their variety of sizes, shapes, treatments and organization on the façade is endless.

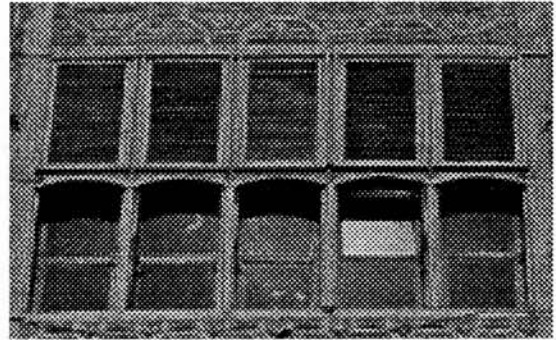


Fig. 3.10. Adjustable blinds and shutters.

### 3.3.2.7. *Qabū* (Basement) (mostly in Makkah)

This vaulted or low-ceiling room was located under the first flight of the first floor. It was used as a storage place for bulky objects like wood charcoal, merchandise and luggage. Because of its coolness, it served as a sleeping area for male members of the family. In some cases, water tanks were constructed in the *aqbiyyah* which were filled with water and furnished a family sitting room.

<sup>19</sup> *Mashrābiyyah* is a term imported from Egypt which refers to the place in the bay-window where porous earthen bottles were exposed to the current of air, therefore cooling by evaporation.



### 3.3.2.8. *Şehrīdj, Khazzān* (Water-tank)

There was always a *şehrīdj* (n.pl. *şahārīdj*) in the lower parts of the house for the storage of rainwater collected from the roof. This rainwater was collected by means of a system of semi-open pipes leading to a main *qaşabah* (vertical pipe) connected to the *şehrīdj*. This was applicable only to the city of Jeddah, while in other cases people used to fill their *şahārīdj* with water which they bought from a water bearer (*saqqā*).

### 3.3.2.9. *Finā', Housh* (Courtyard, walled-yard)

Mainly encountered in Makkah and Al-Madinah, this enclosed space worked as an outdoor open space in towns where horizontal spread of houses was not possible due to topography and lack of building sites (due to city walls).

## 3.3.3. First floor/Upper floors

From the ground floor we come to the family residential quarters. The first floor usually consisted of three main rooms: a *madjlis* (n.pl. *madjālis* = sitting or reception-room), a *mu'akhhhar* (rear-room) and a *mabīt* (sleeping room). These were served by other facilities like a *khazānah* (storage room), a *şuffah* (antechamber), a *murakkab*, *maṭbakh* (kitchen), a *ṭahārah*, *bait al-mā* (latrine) and a *suṭuḥ*, *khārdjah* (roof-top terrace). In large houses, the number of these rooms did not exceed four.

### 3.3.3.1. *Madjlis* (Living, reception-room)

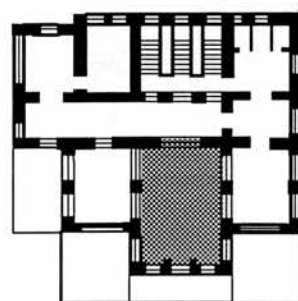
The largest of the these rooms was the *madjlis*, with an antechamber called *şuffah*, communicating with it, and an independent cooking area, washing-space, a latrine and a store. Each of these suites would be occupied by a branch of the family with their children (a nuclear family), as their sleeping quarter during the hot days or the popular afternoon naps, and as a general meeting room at times of feasts and other occasions. This living suite was reassigned on the arrival of a newly-married couple

into the house. The *madjlis* also functioned as the main reception room for family members, relatives and close friends (mainly female visitors and family members).

The *madjlis*, located towards the main façade, was airier and cooler than the rest of the house, therefore it consisted of one or two *rawāshīn* and a large window. It was always taken into consideration that one of the *rawāshīn* faced north and the other faced south so that members of the household could enjoy this sitting area both in summer and in winter.

Wooden *dikkāk* (*n. sing. dikkah* = a wooden sofa) would then be placed as such to form the perimeter of the room. The floor of the *madjlis* was either covered with Persian *sudjād* (carpets) in cases of wealthy families or covered by *ḥaṣīr* (*n.sing. ḥaṣirah* = straw mats) brought from India (Fig. 3.12)<sup>20</sup>. In the middle of the room there was usually a large wooden or marble table (*tawlāt*) for service. Large framed mirrors, utensil shelves and cupboards covered the walls<sup>21</sup>.

In Makkah, this room was suitable for the use of pilgrims because of its relatively large size, therefore it was usually rented during the pilgrimage season. The rooms adjacent to it (*ṣuffah* and *makhzan*) functioned as storage for the luggage of pilgrims, sleeping mattresses as well as for cooking.



## Upper Floors

Fig. 3.11. *al-Madjlis*.

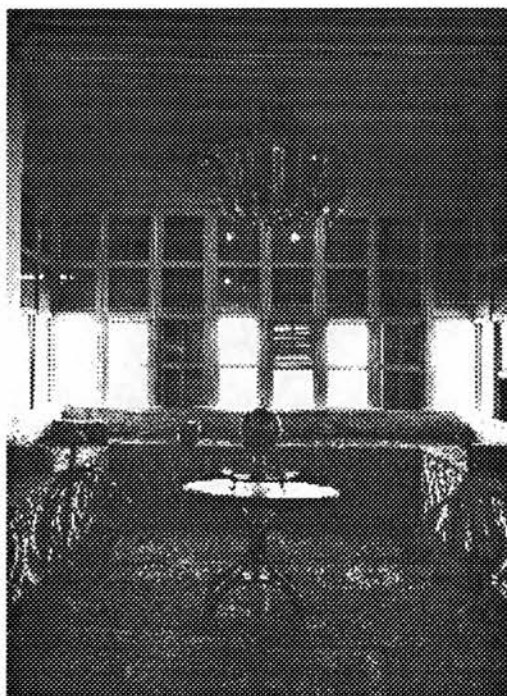


Fig. 3.12. *Dikkāk* formed the perimeter of the room

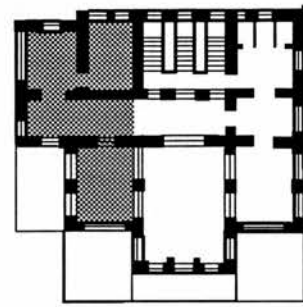
<sup>20</sup> Source: Aba Al-Khail, Abdul Aziz. *Description of Arabic Majlis in Qur'an and Prophet Tradition (Sunnah)*. Al-benna. Vol. 7: 38, Dec/Jan. 1987/1988. 15.

<sup>21</sup> See al-Maghrabī, 1982.

### 3.3.3.2. *Mu'akhir/Mu'akhkhar* (Rear-room)

The second largest room in the house was *al-mu'akhkhar* which was located at one side of the reception room. This room had an opening to a side and/or back street, or a *manwar*. It was used for sitting and storage purposes and consisted of a medium size room, a kitchen and a bathroom and functioned as the family living quarters, all in one room. There was usually a large window in *al-mu'akhkhar*, aside which a wooden *dikkah* would be placed if the room was large enough, otherwise some cotton-stuffed cushions would

serve as seating devices. The floor of the *mu'akhkhar* would be covered with a carpet for sitting purposes. Generally, the *mu'akhkhar* was less formally furnished than any other room in the house. Tea and coffee-making equipments were always present in this room. These consisted of a water boiler (*Jazwah*) imported from India, glasses that came from Holland and Chinese tea pots. There were also food service utensils for the *mu'akhkhar* which was also the dining room of the family. In winter, it functioned as the family bedroom. In the case of a large family, only the children would sleep in the *mu'akhkhar* while the parents would sleep in the *madjlis*.

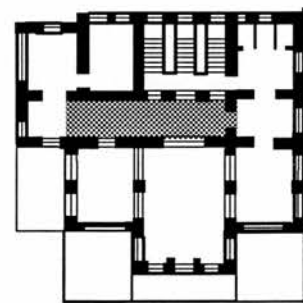


### Upper Floors

Fig. 3.13. *al-Mu'akhkhar*.

### 3.3.3.3. *Şuffah* (Antechamber)

A small room, always located between the *madjlis* and the *mu'akhkhar*, this antechamber served as the entrance to the reception room and the family room. The *şuffah* in the houses of Jeddah had a kitchen and a bathroom, and was used normally for eating and general entertainment of children, women and their guests. In the case of a merchant family, there would be a *şuffah* in every floor equipped with clothes chests which were imported from India and contained the family's jewellery as well. If it were a moderate family, there would be only one *şuffah* with a locally-made chest used for the preservation of food stuffs.

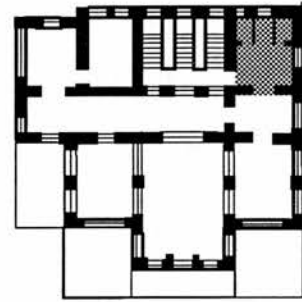


### Upper Floors

Fig. 3.14. *al-Şuffah*.

#### 3.3.3.4. *Khazānah, Makhzan* (Storage-room)

This small room was located on one side of the reception room to store large furniture items like beds and blankets. Other light objects like clothing and hangings were stored in the chests provided in the *mabīt* or *madjlis*. Smaller items like bowls, trays and coffee jugs were stored on the *rufūf* (shelves) provided everywhere in the house. In cases of irregular ground floor plans, the critical angles would be covered and used as storage spaces. In such cases these storing places were known as *makhlawān*. These were most common in the cities of Makkah and Al-Madinah.

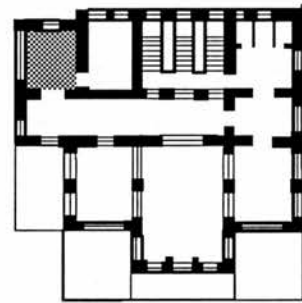


### Upper Floors

Fig. 3.15. *al-Makhzan*.

#### 3.3.3.5. *Bait al-Mā, Merḥāq, Ṭahārah* (Water-closet, toilet)

Usually located facing the *ṣuffah* or at least directly accessible to it. It was accessible from the landings of the staircase. It was a small room equipped with a stone basin and a tab, and was used as a toilet and a bathroom. Most *marāḥiḍ* (n.pl. *merḥāq*) had water containers which were large earthenware jars imported from Morocco known as *zīr mughrabī*, a ledge for soap, a *līfah* (sponge) and a low stool. The floor of the *merḥāq* had a special treatment with gypsum as a water insulator. Each toilet emptied into a vertical, smoothly plastered sewage duct called *qaṣabah* which extended from the roof to the ground level and received the waste from each floor. This duct was open at the roof level for ventilation. The contents of the duct were deposited into an un-plastered subterranean stone septic tank which was cleaned yearly by special workers called *nazzāḥīn*. Hot water was boiled outside the house and brought into the *merḥāq* by the servants upon request. At the door, there were always bathing equipment like a tankard and a bowl.



### Upper Floors

Fig. 3.16. *Bait al-Mā*.

The toilets of large merchant houses were equipped with what was known as the *ḥanaḥfiyyah* or water source (these built-in water containers were built out of stone plastered with a mix of lime powder and oil to make them water-tight). The water carrier or *saqqā* would empty his loads of water into these *ḥanaḥfiyyāt* which were more convenient to use than the *zīr muḥrabī*. (Fig. 3.17.)<sup>22</sup>

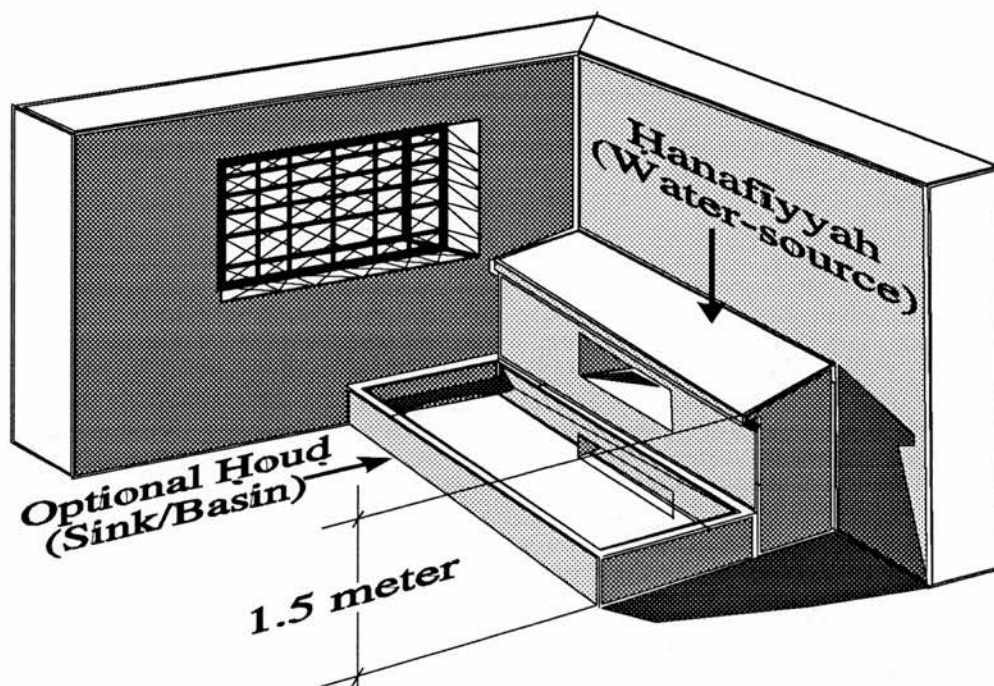
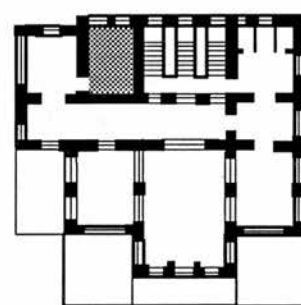


Fig. 3.17. Water-containers (*ḥanaḥfiyyāt*)

### 3.3.3.6. *Maṭbakh, Mūrakkab* (Kitchen)

At the upper floors of the house and near upper terraces, the family *maṭbakh* would be located and equipped with a stone-built coal oven or a cooking-range with three or four grid-ironed fire holes. Wood charcoal was used as the fuel for cooking and boiling water. There would also be a cupboard for food and utensil storage. In large houses accommodating a multi-family, there would be a small kitchen on every floor in the house and a main kitchen for special occasions. In



### Upper Floors

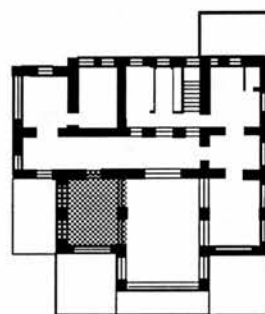
Fig. 3.18. *al-Murakkab*.

<sup>22</sup> Sketch based on the descriptions of *mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin* (who is introduced later in the research).

houses where kitchens were not provided, the *khazānah* was used alternatively for storing and cooking. In such cases, proper ventilation and accessible water supplies were provided for such functions as cooking, storing as well as the reception of close female guests.

### 3.3.3.7. *Mabūt* (Night-room)

This room was usually located in front of the kitchen at the top of the house, and opened to a terrace. It was used for furniture storage and for food preparation (even animal slaughtering in houses that did not have a court). It was always used for eating, living and sleeping by the family members in summer. In large houses there would be another room in the roof for the use of female servants. The *mabūt* would be washed daily, then mattresses would be laid after sunset so that family members, especially children, could sleep when they desire.

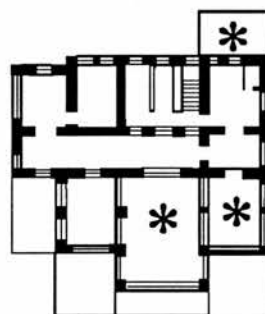


**Upper Floors**

Fig. 3.19. *al-Mabūt*.

### 3.3.3.8. *Khārdjah*, *Suṭuḥ* (Roof-top terrace)

Located on the upper levels of the house, the *khārdjah* was used for sleeping, family and children gatherings, preparing food and drying clothes. They usually communicated with a kitchen and a water-closet. It was most common to find more than three *khārdjāt* in the Makkan house distributed over two or three floors. It was surrounded with latticed wooden parapets or pierced brick walls (*adjur*) for privacy maintenance while allowing ventilation<sup>23</sup>. In Jeddah, and because of the shortage of land, the *suṭuḥ* was the alternative for the private courts of Makkah



**Upper Floors**

Fig. 3.20. *al-Khārdjah*.

<sup>23</sup> The alternating brick patterns of the *adjur* parapets work in the same way as the *rowshān* in cooling and de-humidifying the air.



and Al-Madinah. This roof was also used for collecting rainwater, and so it was usually constructed with a slight slope leading to a hole at one side, into which rainwater was led and then guided to the underground *ṣehrīdj* (water-tank) via a canvas gutter as mentioned previously. On *khārdjāt*, straw-stuffed mattresses were provided along the *saḥārāt*, *saiyyāsīm* (chests or cupboards) which were used for storing clothing items.

The *suṭuḥ* was an outcome of the reduction of building volume towards the top. It was screened from all sides by parapets but opened to the sky. In addition to the horizontal extension of the inside space, *khārdjāt* provided the house with an upward vertical extension towards the sky. Most houses had more than one *khārdjah* (Fig. 3.20) which were situated in different levels on top of the house, providing a direct horizontal extension of the adjacent interior space to a private open space well above the lower floors.

The wooden fixtures of the parapet walls of the *suṭuḥ* as well as the various projections and the juxtaposition of irregular heights, all added to the desired proportioning, flexibility and practicality of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house.

### 3.3.4. Other features of the house

#### 3.3.4.1. *Niqūsh, Zakhārif* (Decorations, ornamentation)

The Ḥedjāzī house was adorned with several types of ornamentation. These could be classified into three categories: geometric motifs (*ashkāl handasiyyah*), floral motifs (*ashkāl nabātiyyah*) and calligraphy (*kitābāt, tā' rīkh*). To achieve any of the three types of decorations, it was common to use wood and gypsum/stucco for high-relief decorations, paints and lime pigments for flush-surfaces drawings, and chiselling for low-relief engravings and carving. Woodwork involved rounding, carving, colouring and assembling of various sizes and types of wood to achieve the desired effect.



The fact that the houses of Jeddah and Al-Madinah were built with sedimentary materials that were malleable to decoration, like lime-stone in Jeddah and mud in Al-Madinah, made it possible for craftsmen to elaborate on the ornamentation of column capitals, wall engravings and other motifs (both high and low-reliefs). The houses of Makkah, being dependent mainly on mountain stone for their construction (i.e., basalt, granite), were stripped of such ornamentation, except for colourful alternating brick patterns known as *ādjur*. Geometric and floral motifs were based on the repetition of selected forms (mostly very simple ones). In larger merchant houses, some pre-Islamic, Mogul Indian and Byzantine motifs were used. Calligraphy was the most popular art of decoration in traditional Ḥedjāz, most of which were based on Qūr'ānic verses and *Aḥādīth* (Prophet's sayings).

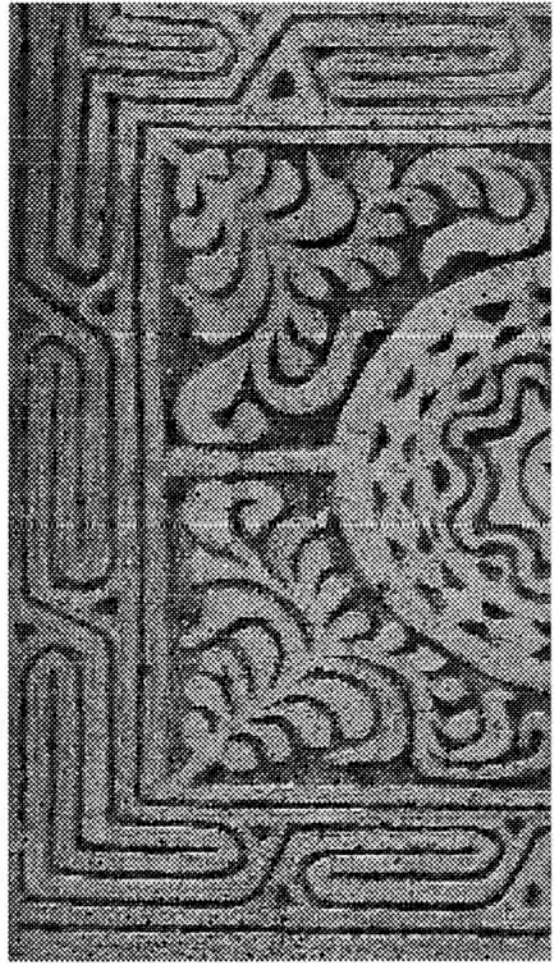


Fig. 3.21. A combination of geometric and floral motifs.

#### 3.3.4.2. *Shughul al-khashab, A'māl al-nidjārah* (Woodwork and carpentry)

This included the frames of windows, doors, parapets, lintels, arches and balconies. Most of the wood was imported from Africa, India and Indonesia. Types of wood that were imported from these regions were characterised by their composition of variegated species of hard wood that were suitable mainly for construction (especially the suspension of the house as discussed in chapter six). However, lighter and softer types of wood were also brought to Ḥedjāz from these, and other localities, and were used for the construction of the grills of *mashrabiyyāt*

and other intricate woodwork. *Ḥaramdīnāt* or balconies required the combination of hard wood as structural elements and softer ones for ornamentation necessary for the completion of this element of the house.

### 3.3.5. Special ground floor arrangement: the case of Al-Madinah

It is noted that the houses of Al-Madinah portrayed a great resemblance with Mamluk and Ottoman houses of Cairo and Syria in terms of their plan layout, room configuration and functions, terminologies and construction techniques. This may be due to the duration of the Egyptian presence in Al-Madinah even prior to 1517 AD (which continued up until the late 1900s). This point was mentioned in most travellers' accounts, and those of the traditional master builders<sup>24</sup>. The following are the components of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house of Al-Madinah region. The *qā'ah* and *dīwān* in these houses replaced the *madjlis* and *maq'ad* of Jeddah and Makkah.

#### 3.3.5.1. *Ḥoush* (Open-court)

Courtyard houses were mostly encountered in Al-Madinah. The court itself was either a square or a rectangle surrounded by a number of rooms, service staircase, the entrance and the *qā'ah*. In the *ḥoush*, livestock would be kept - in most cases it was either sheep or goats to use their milk everyday and occasionally to provide meat for an unexpected important guest. The courtyard was used for reception and family entertaining.

#### 3.3.5.2. *Dīwān* (Reception-hall, sitting-room)

This was a rectangular central court which was approached from the *dihlīz* via a bent axis. The *minwar* - a staircase opening to the *dīwān* - is stepped inward from the top to facilitate the flow of air into the interior. The *dīwān* normally had a covered sitting area on one side only, with most of the inner spaces having openings to the

---

<sup>24</sup> An example of those travellers would be Burton's accounts of the inhabitants of Al-Madinah : "In Madina most of the artisans were neither slaves nor foreigners and were mostly Egyptians." (Burton, 1855. 178). This observation was confirmed by the head of the building guild of Al-Madinah, *mu'allem* Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rīfī. (Tape-recorded interview, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990).

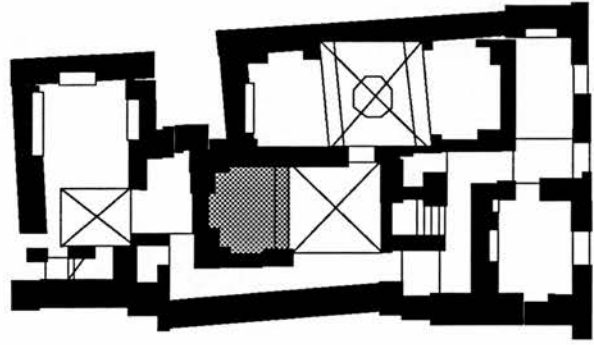
*dīwān*. It was connected and/or overlooked by a number of rooms and openings in the staircase. It was furnished in the same manner as *al-maq'ad* with a fountain in the centre especially in large houses. Larger family houses would also have two *maqā'id* for different age groups. In the case of a male guest sleeping overnight, *al-dīwān* functioned as the guest house. For this reason, *al-dīwān* was always equipped with a *merḥāḍ*,

or *bait al-mā* (water-closet) for the guests' use. In some cases, *al-dīwān* was flanked with a small room for male servants in the case of large houses, otherwise, servants simply slept in the *dihlīz* on wooden beds in winter or outside the house in summer.

In large houses, two large *īwānāt* existed, one for guests and another for the living quarters of a servant and his family. These were also substituted by *dikkāk* (elevated platforms made out of wood) and sitting areas. The servant's *īwān* was also equipped with a *dikkah* and a store room.

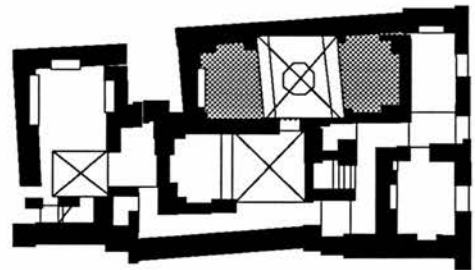
### 3.3.5.3. *Qā'ah* (Hall)

Like the *dīwān*, the *qā'ah* served as a living area on the ground floor at the rear of the house. The *qā'ah* was rectangular in plan, on both sides of which were spaces for sitting known as *mu'akhkhar* (rear room). In proportion, the width of the *qā'ah* was approximately one third of its length. The central part of the *qā'ah*, served as the entrance and circulation area. The *qā'ah* was reached through the *dīwān*, and it usually had no openings at the sides but instead had one



## Ground Floor

Fig. 3.22. *Dīwān and minwar.*



## Ground Floor

Fig. 3.23. *Qā'ah and Bazāhandj.*

opening on the roof called *jilā*. The *jilā* had flaps which were opened or closed by means of ropes pulled from below depending on the position of the sun.

There was an obvious similarity in the organization of domestic spaces in Makkah, Jeddah and Al-Madinah, particularly noticeable in the importance of the *qā'ah* - or its equivalents in these towns - which played a significant role in that it enabled the master of the house to entertain visitors without permitting them inside the house itself. This explains the presence of benches placed in recesses in the lateral walls and also the elaborate decoration of the *qā'ah*.

#### 3.3.5.4. *Minwar* (Staircase light-well)

This air/light shaft was the only three dimensional void (enclosed by wall surfaces) provided within the main body of the Ḥedjāzī house, and was found only in Al-Madinah (an insignificant number of *manāwer* (*n.sing. minwar*) were found in Makkah and Jeddah). It provided the spaces located far from the main façade with ventilation and natural illumination.

#### 3.3.5.5. *Jilā, Bādāhandj/Bāzahandj* (Skylight)

An octagonal sky-light that was found in the *qā'ah* or *dīwān*. The *bādahandj* and *jilā* of Al-Madinah seems to share their names with the wind-catches of the Cairene houses of the same period. It is believed that the term *bādahandj* is originally Turkish, while *jilā* is derived from the Arabic word *jalā'/jalā* which means clarity, to reveal or to make clear<sup>25</sup>.

#### 3.3.6. Simple Turkish houses (16th/17th century)

The description of houses of this type depended mainly on the historical and graphical documentation by Jean-Pierre Greenlaw in "The Coral Buildings of Suakin."

---

<sup>25</sup> The *jilā* was covered with *gūmāsh gal'* (sail cloth) that controlled the amount of light and air entering the *dīwān*. The movement of revealing more light from the ceiling is described as *jilā*.

In his analysis, Greenlaw called these houses the 'original type', which were small single-story houses built out of coral blocks and consisted of one to three rooms (Fig. 3.24.).

Unlike the houses of the Turkish/Egyptian period of the second group, the larger part of the simple Turkish house was reserved for reception and family living, while the remaining part functioned as the family living quarters. Such houses were never higher than two floors, but were usually of one floor only. They consisted of two *madākhil* (entrances), a *dihlīz* (entrance- lobby), a *housh* (court)<sup>26</sup>, a *madjlis* (reception- room), a *dīwān* (reception-hall or sitting-

room), a *makhzan* (storage-room), two *marāḥiḍ* (latrines), a small kitchen, a family living-room (called the second *madjlis*) and a *khārdjah* (roof-terrace). In the case of a single story house, there was usually a large kitchen, a living-room for the family (called the top *madjlis*), a latrine, and a terrace with storage-space. From the entrance, a guest went to the *dihlīz* through which he had access to the *housh* overlooked by a spacious *dīwān*. A *madjlis* was connected to the *housh* and extended by means of a shed into the court. A store was connected to the interior of the *madjlis*. As for the latrine, it was accessible through the court.

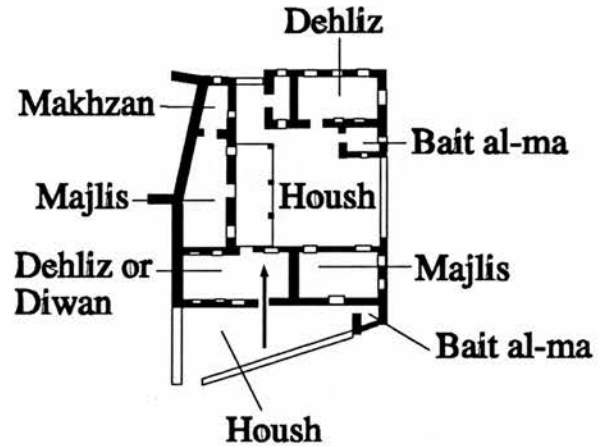


Fig. 3.24. Small houses from the island of Sawakin (modified from Greenlaw, 1976. 23).

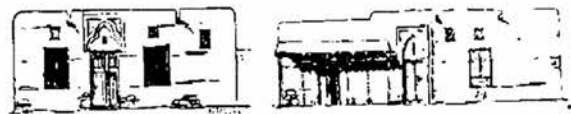


Fig. 3.25. Elevations of the house (Greenlaw, 1976. 23).

<sup>26</sup> Although Jeddah and Sawakin are climatically identical, the interior courtyard (*housh*) appeared only in Sawakin and Al-Madinah.

### 3.4. Typology of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house

In the process of cultural exchange between the sub-cultures of Ḥedjāz, when king Abdul Aziz attacked Ḥedjāz in 1922 AD/1341 AH, people from Makkah left their city for Jeddah where they settled with relatives, friends or whoever invited them to live in their homes. This was a period of significant cultural exchange between the Makkans and the people of Jeddah. An increased variety of ideas on building methods and even building materials was exchanged and applied during these days. As a consequence, much of the terminology of the different localities of Ḥedjāz has been used interchangeably ever since.

Furthermore, during the late 1800s, wealthy merchants and *ashrāff* travelled beyond Ḥedjāz and came back with foreign wives and new ideas and, often foreign craftsmen to give form to these ideas. Their aim was to make their houses so different from the others that any attempt at imitations - by local *mu'allemin* - would take some time to succeed. These individualistic trends to appear different from everyone else were particularly evident in the case of those who did not regard themselves as part of the social élite (e.g., new comers to Ḥedjāz). This group was invariably the initiator of 'radical' change, introducing all kinds of modifications and spending large sums of money to establish themselves as part of the upper classes of society.

The general organization of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house derived from the organization of the different patterns of houses that were produced in the Arab world, these were: the central open court type surrounded by rooms (mostly found in Al-Madinah), the external court type (found in Makkah), or the type with no court (as those of Jeddah). These variations were mainly attributed to a number of reasons, given the great chronological and geographical extent of the Ḥedjāz region and the slight diversity of the cultural aspects. The essential unity of the architecture of the Western region of Arabia was attributed to the Ottoman/Egyptian influence; similar forms, motifs, space organization and the like occur from Jeddah to Al-Madinah. Nevertheless, within this general framework, there are well defined regional varieties, all of which developed through time. These variations were caused by many factors including availability of building land, topography, climate and socio-economic status, with religious demands, social customs and personal needs being almost uniform all over Ḥedjāz.



The comparative analysis represented by Figure (3.A.) summarizes the several common characteristics of typical traditional Hedjāzī houses. It is clear that, in most traditional Hedjāzī houses, spaces were arranged from the most public to the most private. The front entrance was usually the place of exchange between the public world and the private interior of the house. On the outside, there was a differentiation of territory from the street to the front door, elaborated by a *maṣṭabah*, *merkāz* (sitting platform) or an archway. On the inside, the house entry was partially separated from the rest of the house, so arranged so that the visitor cannot see directly into the house. Indirectly or directly accessible to the entrance was the *dihlīz*, *qā'ah* (hall) which led to the *maq'ad*, *madjlis* (reception). This was, in turn, adjacent to the *ṣuffah*. These were the main public places, often associated with them was a *merḥāḍ* (toilet), a *khuzānah* (closet) and/or a *murakkab* (kitchen).

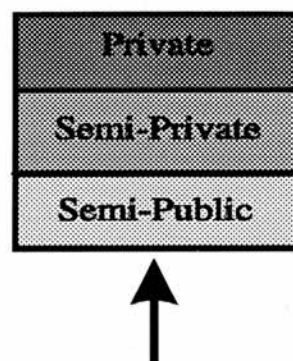


Fig. 3.26. Spaces were arranged from the most public to the most private.

Transitional stages were grouped yet separated from the rest of the house by level changing (Fig 3.27 a & b.), by distance or by change in hall-way configuration (i.e., narrowing width, lowering ceilings). All rooms of the house, save the antechamber, had exterior walls and windows. It was common for the *madjlis*, *maq'ad* to open directly to a *ḥaramdinah* (balcony), a *khārdjah* (terrace), or a *finā'*, *ḥoush* to allow for outdoor recreation. The outdoor area in front of the house was stepped up for passive activities, mostly for senior members of the household.

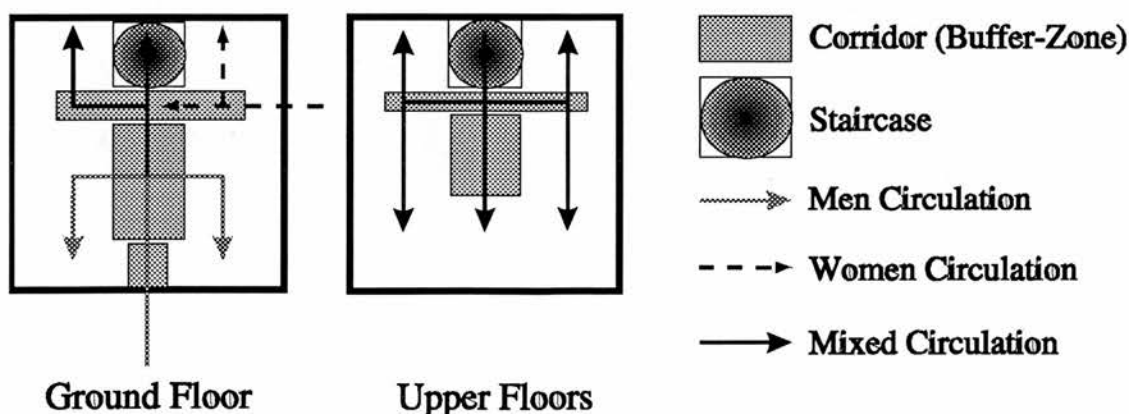


Fig. 3. 27a. Corridors working as buffer-zones.



Circulation elements took place in a diffused manner through spaces and rooms as well as in areas that were mainly designated for that purpose. Rooms were situated along a corridor which worked as a buffer zone (Fig. 3.27 a.) and were never directly approached (Fig. 3.28.). Staircases were

used to access particular rooms (i.e., male and female areas). The staircase was usually concealed, while located near most rooms to create a link between levels which united the house. As discussed earlier, names of certain spaces in the house did not necessarily refer to the activities that took place in them, it was the nature of the space that determined what happened in it. For example, *al-maq'ad* which was situated in the public reception areas, was a very active area, while the family *madjlis* - situated in the private family areas - was more passive than the rest of the house.

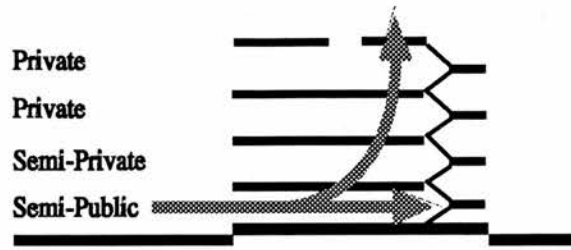


Fig. 3.27b. Changing levels of privacy.

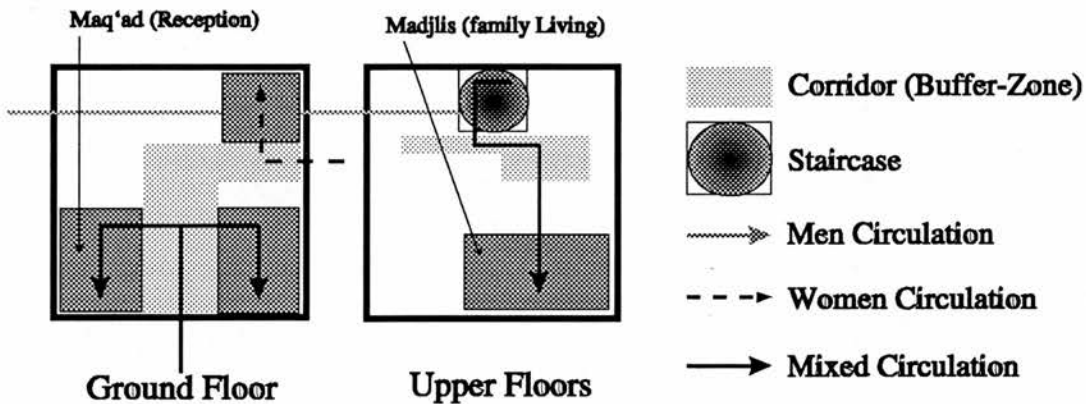


Fig. 3.28. Rooms were never approached directly.

Generally, the traditional house of Ḥedjāz can be divided into two main parts: servant and served (Fig. 3.29.). The servant part is represented by the kitchen, bathrooms, and stores. The served section is the reception and living areas, lounges and other multi-function rooms. Staircases, corridors and antechambers represented the circulation elements between rooms and floors. Ground floors were reserved for the reception and entertainment of guests, while upper floors were occupied by the family. Accordingly, these were usually larger than the ground floor area since it catered for a larger number of people of different genders and ages.

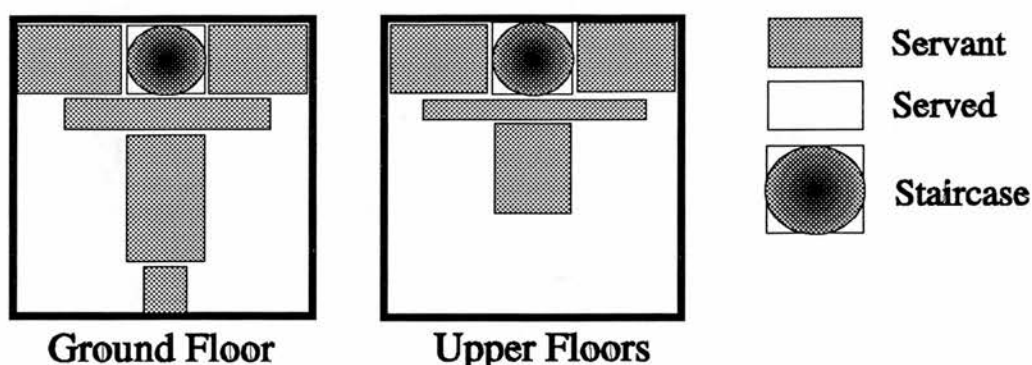


Fig. 3.29. The house was divided into two main parts: servant and served

The houses of Makkah and Al-Madinah represented some variations that were not uniform throughout Ḥedjāz. For example, because the houses of Makkah developed as row houses, walls on the longer sides were shared by adjoining units. This gave them a characteristically ‘thin’ and tall appearance, with rooms arranged vertically in most cases. Another major characteristic is that the area of the Makkan house decreased upwards in order to allow sufficient space for *khardjāt* (terraces). These were highly utilized by the Makkan for sleeping during the coolness of the night.

In Makkah and Al-Madinah, where the terrain is hilly, the typical spatial organization of houses was maintained, regardless of site irregularities. This compliance underlines the role of custom rather than local technical constraints in shaping the house and determining its spatial configuration. Furthermore, the courtyard houses of Makkah and Al-Madinah afforded many things: they meet the climatic needs of these regions by acting as a channel for breeze, they provided outdoor spaces for household activities (e.g., drying of clothes), and they provided spaces for communal ceremonies. Perhaps most important, they acted as outdoor spaces for women, especially if we consider the fact that women spent most of their lives inside the house.

### 3.4.1. Contrast with houses of other Muslim countries

As discussed in chapter one, by the end of the 17th century AD, the original population of Ḥedjāz has become increasingly mixed with people from different and distant locations such as Yemen, Hadramout (south Arabia), Egypt, Persia, Turkey,

India, the southern fringes of Russia (Afghanistan, Bukhara, Bashkīr & Daghestan), Syria, Morocco, Southern Africa and South East Asia. But only those who chose to become Muslims were able to settle in the towns and mix with the local inhabitants as accepted members of the community and were therefore able to merge and blend with those of the indigenous population. The character of the resultant cultural accretion was naturally influenced by the numbers and backgrounds of the various settlers. For example, particularly large numbers of immigrants from Yemen, Hadramout, Egypt and South East Asia settled in Jeddah and Makkah and smoothly interwove with the local culture to form the pattern of permanent mutual assimilation.

The building craft greatly gained from this process because of the relatively advanced building technology that these cultures brought to Ḥedjāz. As discussed in the following chapters, a catalogue of their contribution would include building tools, construction methods and techniques, materials, an augmented nomenclature and a long experience in the building craft<sup>27</sup>. Professionals like carpenters, plasters, blacksmiths and others were among the most welcome settlers for their ability to enhance the houses of wealthy clients like merchants and *ashrāff* who, in most cases, facilitated their journey from their homelands to Ḥedjāz and provided them with the necessities of their settlement in cities like Jeddah and Makkah. Merchants played the role of patrons for these craftsmen for a long period afterwards.

The Turkish government also seems to have brought a number of their craftsmen to the area<sup>28</sup>, especially to build private palaces and garrisons, which would explain the greater Turkish influence upon the early education of *mu'allemin* and other craftsmen before an Egyptian authority took over around the 1850s. Some major modifications to building technology took place, mostly in the form of improvements in tools, techniques and methods of construction. Among the most noticeable features introduced during this period were the large bay-windows, which

---

<sup>27</sup> *Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin spoke of craftsmen from Egypt, Syria and Yemen who worked in Ḥedjāz for years long before he became the head of the building guild in Jeddah. Eventually, some of them settled in the region and were recognized as Ḥedjāzīs like *mu'allemin* Jamīl Sha'rāwī (Egyptian), *mu'allemin* Serādj Madanī (Egyptian), and *mu'allemin* Aḥmad Shams (Indian). Those *mu'allemin* had Ḥedjāzī apprentices who later became *mu'allemin* themselves and followed their masters' building techniques and terminologies.

<sup>28</sup> Some of the most prominent *mu'allemin* of traditional Ḥedjāz were known locally to be of foreign origins. These were masters of different professions and speciality, and the influence of their backgrounds was transmitted by their apprentices for generations afterwards.

came to be known as *rowshān* or the Egyptian *mashrabiyyah* in the local Ḥedjāzī dialect, and *al-bait al-monaẓam* (symmetrical building models).

It should go without saying that strictly formal comparison of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house with later houses or with similar houses in other cultures is of very limited value without consideration of the specific context of historical, socio-cultural and economic factors. Therefore, the analysis of this section does not engage in the study in the cultural backgrounds of foreign houses - as it is outside the scope of this research - and concentrates on broad contrasts between architectural solutions to similar problems. It is also important to establish here and once again that the traditional Ḥedjāzī solution of architectural and structural problems were always dealt with collectively by looking at similar problems and their solutions of other localities. 'Spontaneous adaptation' rather than imitation was the norm of builders of the whole region under the Ottoman influence (Egypt, Syria, Yemen, North Africa, Persia, India) which was more or less coherent<sup>29</sup>.

What we can call Islamic cities in which different forms of houses evolved are to be found in different parts of the world (not necessarily Arab). Certainly, we can not expect the urban life in these localities to have taken the same form in all these regions, not so much because of supposed differences of national characteristics as because of varying soils and climates, different inheritances and involvements of various commercial activities. In search of common factors between the traditional Ḥedjāzī house and other Muslim houses, we find that the presence of the Ottoman influence upon a number of these regions as a suitable denominator. Such regions like Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen are quite suitable for the purpose of architectural contrast intended in this section. The similarity between the houses of Ḥedjāz and those of the island of Sawakin also makes this a suitable case for comparison.

Furthermore, the difference between house forms within each of these localities must be borne in mind before any contrast is to be conducted, so that we should not, for example, apply the northern parts of Egypt to its southern model, or that of upper Syria to its central regions and so forth. In general, this section is mainly concerned

---

<sup>29</sup> It was also claimed that Ḥedjāzī architecture is "*in part the result of influences introduced by Malayan craftsmen, which testifies to the cosmopolitan nature of the region...*" See Glassè, Cyril. The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam. London: Stacey Int., 1989. 152.

with house examples which were sufficiently documented and illustrated - mainly during the 18th and 19th centuries AD).

One can also speak of the influence of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house on other Arab or Muslim domestic architecture. Examples of the *Sawāknī* or the Swahili houses<sup>30</sup> are directly related to the Ḥedjāzī house in my opinion. However, although this kind of study is outside the scope of this research, examples of houses of different regions are included in figure (3.B.). Consequently, when we speak about the form-evolution of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house as a genuine expression of the characteristics of the region and its people, we must also take into considerations the sphere of outside influences. Such influences affect the course and character of the final product (the house). Through direct contact between the merchants of Ḥedjāz and those of other regions and between the pilgrims and the native Ḥedjāzīes, similarities of forms between the traditional Ḥedjāzī house and other Muslim nations becomes obvious. And the more frequent the contact, the closer the characteristics of form. The writings of many travellers to Arabia have revealed some sort of similarities and differences between the Ḥedjāzi houses and those of Cairo, Syria, Istanbul and Yemen. For instance, Snouck Hurgronje mentioned that the *ashrāff* and rich merchants of Ḥedjāz were in the habit of employing Turkish, Syrian and Egyptian architects for the production of their house<sup>31</sup>.

The major obtainable result from the comparison between the traditional Ḥedjāzī houses and those of other Islamic regions is that it is very difficult to determine the extent of influence exerted by the architecture of one culture over the other. The apparent similarity between the houses of one region and another does not indicate which of them was more influential over the other. It is also noted that the houses of some regions, like Cairo and Al-Madinah for example, are more closely related to each other than those of Jeddah and Iraq.

---

<sup>30</sup> Coral buildings of the East African Coast were referred to by Kirkman as Arab buildings, established by merchants from Arabia who married local African women. See Kirkman, James S. The Arab City of Gedi: Excavations at the Great Mosque - Architecture and Finds. London: Oxford University Press, 1954. *Passim*.

<sup>31</sup> Hurgronje, Snouck C. Mekkah in the Latter Part of the 19th Century. Trans. J. H. Monahan. London: Luzac and Co., 1931. 38.



In general, however, one can say that the basic principle of space configuration in most, if not all, of these regions is quite similar. The concern for privacy determines to a great extent the location of reception areas and buffer zones in terms of their relation to the main entrance. Privacy maintenance is achieved in different ways in different regions, and is manifested through various architectural solutions like bent-entrances leading to corridors then to main reception areas, while the family section of the house is either moved to upper floors or pushed to the far end of the house. In Yemen, the spatial arrangement of the houses in comparison to that of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house is inverted (up-side-down). In the Yemeni house, reception areas are located on the upper floors while the family living quarters occupy the lower floors.

In the traditional Ḥedjāzī house, the location of the staircase was carefully considered to achieve maximum privacy for female movement within the house. While it was usually located in the centre or the far end of the house, the staircase was always separated from the rest of the house by corridors or antechambers. In some cases, special concealed staircases were provided specially for female movement. In all cases, no direct visual access from the entrance to the staircase was maintained.

Houses with courtyards like those of Damascus, Cairo, Baghdad and Al-Madinah had a slightly different space arrangement than those of Makkah, Jeddah and San'ā. The latter were mainly introverted, where the interior elevations were considered to be the exterior ones and were more elaborate in decoration and elevational treatment. Courtyards tended to determine the circulation of both family members and guests in such a way that activities like reception and living on the ground floor couldnot be carried out simultaneously. In smaller houses, reception areas overlooking the court were either sealed off the rest of the house with parapets, or were given the entire ground floor while family living quarters occupied upper floors.

The most noticeable foreign influence on the traditional Ḥedjāzī house is manifested in its decoration, which was always integrated with the fabric of the house rather than being applied as an after-thought. Traditional Ḥedjāzī woodwork, for example, had hints of Malayan, Indonesian and Indian influences, where most of the wood came from. On the last page of figure (3.B.), an entrance from a Indian house is shown. Note the similarity in the overall design and decoration schemes of the door, the iron railings on the windows with those of a traditional Ḥedjāzī door.

A final note that is worth mentioning is that no significant similarity could be detected between the traditional houses of Ḥedjāz and those of Turkey, other than the projecting oriel-windows. Otherwise, I found the plan configuration, architectural features and the spatial organization of both house models to be very different. Accordingly, I believe that attributing some features of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house to the Turks is only based on the fact that the Ottomans (Turkish/Egyptian) dominated the region during the evolution of the house (which would only explain the similarities between the technical terminology of these regions). However, as discussed in chapter six, there are enough evidence to suggest that Turkish builders and craftsmen were active in some parts of Ḥedjāz like Taif and Al-Madinah. The same could be said about other Arab/Muslim regions that came under the Ottoman influence like Cairo, Syria and Iraq.

### **3.5. The social morphology of the Ḥedjāzī house**

The way traditional Ḥedjāzī families organized household tasks was related to age, gender and socio-cultural status of the inhabitants, and their interpretation of the roles, routines and rituals assigned to each group. The following section deals with the classification of activities and space, their relative position, demarcation and meanings. This should help identifying the reciprocal relation between the design, meaning and use of the traditional Ḥedjāzī domestic space.

#### **3.5.1. Relationships between spaces and household activities**

Investigating domestic activity systems is a useful starting point for better understanding of the culture within which the traditional Ḥedjāzī house developed. These could also lead to an understanding of lifestyles (which determined the spatial organization of the house). In this section, activities of the house, the specific way of carrying them out and where were they carried out, other associated activities and the meaning associated with each activity all are dealt with. This analysis reveals some aspects of the communal lifestyle, images, values, norms and sub-cultures all of which are important in explaining the organization of space, people, time and meaning inside the house.



### 3.5.1.1. Activities of the house

The Ḥedjāzī house was like a net of affective and spatial considerations that formed an interactive whole. Activities in the house were not mainly determined by the pace of activities (e.g., Kitchen = fast-paced, bedroom = slow-paced) but rather by environmental constraints such as the day and night cycle, and seasonal and lunar changes. Furthermore, the spatial location of domestic activities in the house conformed to the way domestic chores were commonly classified, located and interrelated. For example, most roomy spaces, like the *madjlis*, accommodated the activities of eating, sleeping and leisure activities juxtaposed.

It is to be noted that while diurnal and nocturnal activities of the house overlapped, spaces in which each set of activities was carried out differed greatly. Therefore, it would be more reasonable to discuss the activities carried out in each space according to the season and time of a day, and the gender/age-specific nature of activities and their assigned spaces.

The principal location of rooms in the house had a special connotation. "...aim for the chest, even if you were penniless,"<sup>32</sup> which means that if one was invited to a house, one should position oneself in the focal position to gain the respect of the others, this shows how the traditional Ḥedjāzīs reserved a high esteem for such locations. When a guest was greeted at the centre of each room, he was figuratively at the centre of the host's attention, the most important person in the house at that moment. Senior members of the household and very special guests were the occupiers of such highly honoured locations. We should note that this is a conceptual place and not a physical one. Also

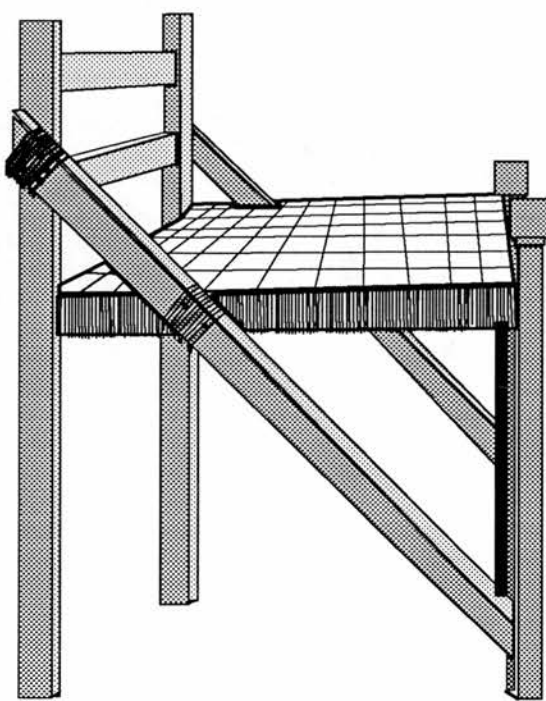


Fig. 3.31. *al-Merkaz*.

<sup>32</sup> A traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb.

note that a single room could have more than one 'centre' depending on the time of day. For example, *al-merkāz* (a high sitting-platform) would be the focus of the reception area in the morning, while *jalsat al-rowshān* (the sitting area in the bay-window) would be the focus of that same room in the afternoon and so forth. The *sedjniyyah* or the cover of the *merkāz* became synonymous with it, and were used interchangeably to mean the 'important or principal place.'

Furnishing the house was the task of the ladies. Furniture were not designed to be manipulated: once arranged, pieces were almost fixed. Generally, there was little movable pieces of furniture in the house (most of the house furniture were built-in like *maṣāṭib* or elevated platforms, and recessed-wall shelves). In general, the Ḥedjāzī house lacked furniture if contrasted with today's houses. Accordingly, it was necessary for all activities to take place on the floor or built-in benches. Various portable items were used for activities which today call for relatively immovable furniture. For example, the cotton-stuffed mattresses discussed earlier were used for sleeping, low tables were used for dining and the preparation of food. These were stored after use to make room for other activities. Since the floor was used for both sleeping and sitting, it had to be made 'comfortable' by covering it with thick or double carpets.

Floor seating also allowed for large number of people to be received unlike modern houses where there are usually more people than pieces of furniture can hold. However, and as discussed later in the research, furniture had special values in traditional Ḥedjāzī houses: because they were bought to stay, virtually every object in the house had a specific identity and a highly-valued history. These were not treated as commodities with a market value like today's furniture. Towards the middle 1900s, the traditional Ḥedjāzī house saw the introduction of relatively immovable furniture like dining tables, *dekkāk*, sofas and other sitting couches. One would think that since storage furniture like cupboards and built-in shelves were replaced the newly-introduced items to free the walls and make furniture placement easier: they were no longer needed. The fact is that they remained in the house despite the fact that they hindered - in some cases - the placement of wooden book shelves and cupboards.

The introduction of new immovable furniture resulted in designating function-specific rooms inside the house. The new desire to have different rooms for particular activities led to the building of annexes or the subdividing of exiting rooms to create

new ones assigned for a new activity. This practice, combined with the introduction of more immovable furniture resulted in extremely crowded interior spaces. However, the actual patterns of space use have changed only modestly. Sitting and eating remained to be carried out on the floor during informal events, while sleeping and other passive activities were carried out in various places in the house.

There were no furniture warehouses where Ḥedjāzīs went for selecting their home-fittings other than *zuqāq al-khārāṭīn* (the lane of turners) who specialized in making wooden tables, chests and cupboards. The level of furnishing the house was an indication of the family's wealth. The more movable pieces of furniture, the higher the income of the family (the same distinction was also applied to furniture made locally or imported). It was actually the amount and quality of wood used in the manufacturing of furniture that made the distinction, because of the relatively high cost of wood in Ḥedjāz.

Eating areas were defined by laying a *sufrah* (table-cloth) or a low wooden table - *ṭabliyyah* - which was laid directly on the floor at the meal-time. Again, the person setting *alā rā'saha* (lit. on it's head = the principle position) was usually the head or mistress of the family and other respected guest.

The location of the *zir* (earthen water-container) in the *merḥāq* of each floor imposed a direct connection between this room and the rest of the house (this water container held the water needed for different activities). Accordingly, the water-closet had to be visually and physically isolated from the rest of the house, while maintaining direct accessibility for both guests and members of the household. The *saqqā* (water-carrier) had to have a direct access to this room and, at the same time, had to be confined to a semi-public area. Water-closets were thus located in close proximity to the staircase which was designed in such a way that ensured the privacy of adjacent rooms. A technique devised by the *mu'Allemīn* allowed each flight of stairs to be concealed from the rest of the staircase (Fig. 3.32.)<sup>33</sup> so that unexpected encounters between non-related men and women were eliminated.

---

<sup>33</sup> Figure (3.32.) is modified from a sketch by Faden, Yousef. *Traditional Houses of Makkah: The Influence of Socio-Cultural Themes Upon Arab-Muslim Dwellings*. Ed. Aydin Germen. *Islamic Architecture and Urbanism*. Proceedings of a symposium. Dammam, Saudi Arabia: King Faisal University, January, 1980. 318.

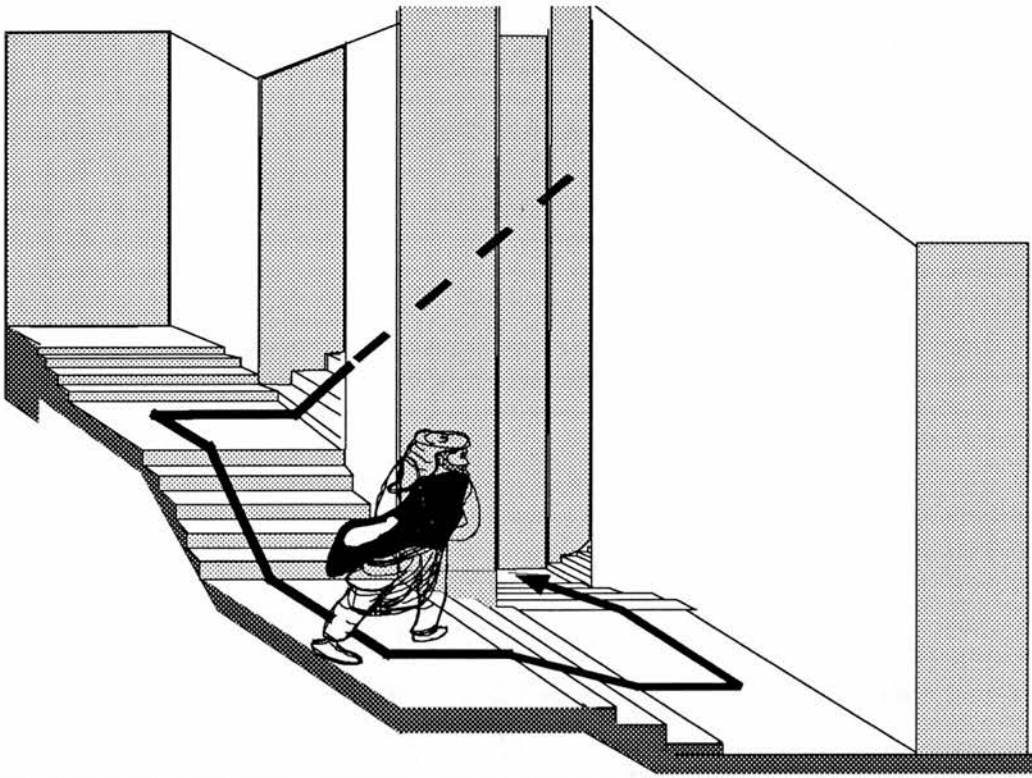


Fig. 3.32. Each flight of stairs was concealed from the rest of the staircase.

The toilet in the Hedjazi house is a place where both temporal and spiritual dirt is eliminated, and hence where God's Name may not be uttered. Therefore, toilets were (and still are) divided in such a way that provided clean spaces where one can utter the ablution prayer away from the temporal functions of the toilet. A sink was provided outside the door of the toilet area specially for this purpose.

Rooms in the traditional Hedjazi house changed functions and activities from one hour of the day to the other. 'Portable' bedrooms and sofas were represented by the use of *bāṭermāt* - mattresses - for sitting or sleeping, almost anywhere in the house. The time of the year and day determined the location of such activities like sleeping for example: laying mattresses in the *khārdjāt* after sunset or during the hottest part of the year turned them into bedrooms and living areas, and attached strings of restrictions to them concerning accessibility, clothing, behaviours, etc.

### 3.5.1.2. Use of space and its effects on domestic architecture

As seen earlier, the spatial organization of Hedjazi houses differed from the traditional Arab courtyard houses in terms of their connection with the outside world:

the street. While the Arab house is inward looking towards the centre, the Ḥedjāzī house opened up fully to the street. To achieve visual connection from the outside to the inside, space was oriented accordingly. The possibility of horizontal expansion was achieved by an appropriate treatment of the window openings, and the possibility of vertical expansion by the treatment of the height of ceilings. These techniques allowed for a strong connection with the outside through their capability of horizontally allowing light and breeze, and visual range to reach beyond the skin of the house to the outside<sup>34</sup>. While vertically, the feeling of spaciousness was conveyed by extending the height of rooms. This was shown clearly in the increase of openness towards the upper floors of the house until the level of the *suṭuḥ* (open-terrace)<sup>35</sup>.

Another aspect of the spatial organization of the Ḥedjāzī house was the convention of providing a space within the main space of the room. These minor spaces were usually connected to the outside by one way or another to achieve an outward extension to the main space. An example of this would be the extension of the *rowshān*'s sitting area away from the main space of the room and into the space of the street. But unlike sitting in the street, the *rowshān* was still within the private realm of the house and an integral part of the inside.

Similar techniques were also employed to enhance the quality of the interior space by allowing natural light and breeze to an otherwise dim and hot area. They also added minor spaces with different characteristics and functions. An example of those could be seen in Makkah where a private open space surrounded by a wall and annexed to the main body of the building was a way of connecting the outside with the inside<sup>36</sup>. The outcome was a house that lent itself to the street while fully retaining its introverted and private qualities.

---

<sup>34</sup> Visually speaking, the wooden-latticed windows were connectors between from the inside space to the outdoors, while they were visual barriers from the outside to the house interior. They were large and transparent, yet their geometrical patterns completely concealed this openness from the outside.

<sup>35</sup> Eyuce, Ahmet T. Solid and Void Relationships in the Traditional Architecture of the Western Region. Manuscript. Jeddah: K.A.A. University, [n.d.].

<sup>36</sup> This relatively small, private open-space was obtained by a recess in the main body of the building.

Furthermore, the alleyway within the *ḥāra* was considered and treated by the residents as a semi-private space as discussed earlier. A hierarchical sequence of open spaces on the street level - from most public to most private - has been established by the prevailing cultural norms of the *ḥāra*. These norms resulted in semi-private open spaces restricted to only a few residents and could not be trespassed by others. This hierarchical sequence was carried on from the *ḥāra* to boundaries of the house itself, and then completed within the house. As a rule, the deeper one entered within these spaces, the closer and more familiar one was to the residents around these space. In the house, the closer one was to the family - ranging from a friend to a member of the family - the deeper and higher one could move within the house.

The relative position of the entrance hall, for example, to the other rooms of the house illustrates that although there is no direct correlation between the nominal distance between rooms of each house, there was an underlying structure that enabled the position of rooms to be considered with respect to the desired degree of privacy envisaged by the residents. This concern for privacy and its hierarchy was not only important in the location of rooms relative to the public realm of the *ḥāra*, but also in defining the spatial relations between rooms. That is, whether they were accessible only from a circulation corridor, or whether there was a sequencing of spaces or changes of levels between them. The strict adherence to visual privacy for the family also precluded any overlooking of a neighbour's property. Thus the uniform height that was so characteristic of a traditional Ḥedjāzī settlement was as much an outcome of this social convention as it was of technological limitations and pressures for development.



CHAPTER FOUR

ORAL HISTORY AS  
A SOURCE OF TRADITION



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ORAL HISTORY AS A SOURCE OF TRADITION

---

#### Introduction

I believe that man and his built-environment formed a single system and that the study of one part of this system would reveal something of the other. Yet one ought to acknowledge, in interpreting man's built-environment, that the results are not always safe from presuppositions and prejudice, nor do they yield satisfactory or widely acceptable conclusions on their own; to interpret the meaning of traditional domestic architecture on the evidence of the physical form alone is to become hostage to one's own intellectual perceptions. And these could be far removed from those of the user or designer.

Therefore, for a traditional house to be studied, it must be considered from inside the culture that produce it, stressing what the people in that culture themselves emphasize, rather than in terms of an imposed image of an outside observer<sup>1</sup>. Researchers are always outsiders, while the natives of a certain studied locale are insiders. This chapter concentrates on how members of the traditional Ḥedjāzī culture see things through their own perspective. Its evidence is derived from interviews with a number of traditional master-builders (*mu'allemin*) and prominent Ḥedjāzī families from the three major cities of the region. The main concern of these interviews was to find out what people thought as much as about what they did.

The testimony of traditional families and builders contribute to this research through a wide range of insights that support and reinforce certain interpretations, as well as validating their consistency. The significance of these 'living traditions'<sup>2</sup> is

---

<sup>1</sup> Bearing in mind that the subject matter of this research is not the works of architecture as such, but the meaning that they had for clients and builders within their environment.

<sup>2</sup> This is an expression that was coined by Cheikh Amadou Hampate Ba. He saw such testimonies as "*the bond between man and the spoken word*", being transformed from one *mu'allemin* to his apprentice, and from one generation of *mu'allemin* to the other. These oral transmissions were regarded as bonds that tied people through the years, as well as bonding houses to their builders. As such, oral transmissions are

that they render architectural interpretations which were applied at the time the houses were built and occupied, rather than modern extrapolations. The revelation of the chronology of building and sequences of development lent perspective upon the community that stood behind the creation of each house.

The previous chapters are based on written records which help to provide the setting against which the oral historical traditions of the region may be understood. These are the main sources of information upon which the rest of the research is based. In this form, the orally-collected information supplement written records, complement what has been documented in formal history and provide information about the past that exists in no other form. Interviews with members and leaders of the Ḥedjāzī building guild, as well as with family members of the major cities of the region, were conducted with this end in mind.

#### **4.1. Goals and objectives of the interviews**

##### **4.1.1. Goals**

This orally-collected data was the aim of a field-trip to the major cities of the region, namely Jeddah, Makkah and Al-Madinah. The procedure of the analysis conducted, the dates and the people involved are all described in more detail later in this chapter. The following is a list of the objectives of the fieldwork:

- To produce the data necessary for the reconstruction of the design and building process of the 18th and 19th centuries Ḥedjāzī houses, aimed at an understanding of the nature of producing a house in this period from the point of view of those who lived in it or produced it.
- The assessment of the three major Ḥedjāzī cities as to their suitability for representing the architectural and socio-cultural characteristics of the region in this historical period.

---

regarded as the essence of tradition. See Hampate Ba, Cheikh Amadou. "The Living Tradition." General History of Africa, Ed. J. Ki-Zerbo. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981. 1: 183.

- The determination of the extent of public (clients) and professional (*mu'allemin*) satisfaction with the processes of producing traditional houses in the region during the historical period of concern.

- To examine the traditional political and economic patterning of human values, needs and desires as well as the rules and norms of behaviour, the politics of groups, the economic factors of change, and the dynamics of complex social interactions. It is my belief that these factors have great influence upon people's perceptions of house, home, home-range and their production<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4.1.2. Immediate objectives

The immediate objectives of the fieldwork were;

- To locate the remaining traditional houses in their natural settings around the major cities of Ḥedjāz.

- To locate and interview the remaining 'heads' of the building guild (*sheṭōūkh al-bannā*), and *mu'allemin* (*n.sing. mu'allemin* = master-builder) who designed and built these or similar traditional houses. (Such interviews should preferably include other craftsmen or apprentices of such *mu'allemin*).

- To locate and interview elder clients, owners or relatives of family members who lived in or witnessed the design and building of traditional houses.

- To locate and interview as many dwellers of traditional neighbourhoods (*ḥārāt*) as possible.

- To compare and contrast traditional houses built in similar historical periods around the major cities of Ḥedjāz, to extrapolate major differences or similarities in terms of design and building processes, building techniques,

---

<sup>3</sup> These are described later in the research.

space organization, architectural elements, overall layout of functions and rooms, family lifestyles and neighbourhoods' social networks,...etc.

- To become familiar with published information and archival collections relating to the subject under study and the possibility of using these materials as corroborative evidence when testing oral information for validity.

The main stage of the field-analysis depended on locating and distinguishing authoritative master-builders and members of the traditional Ḥedjāzī society in order to:

- Determine the authority and control of the master-builder over the design and building processes as well as to contrast between the socio-cultural strata of both the client and the designer/builder.
- Determine the authority of the traditional guild of builders over building codes and regulations.
- Determine the extent of the influence of socio-cultural norms and accepted behavioural patterns on the production of the traditional house.
- Document and, hence, comprehend details of the traditional building techniques and construction methods.
- Determine the existence of any particular traditional social functions, ceremonies or celebrations (physical, spiritual) which were associated with the process of producing a house.
- Recollect images of the traditional Ḥedjāzī way of life in terms of individual habits, socio-cultural norms, behavioural patterns, typical family lifestyles, neighbourhood social networks,...etc.
- Determine the traditional position of the master-builder in the communication process with clients and users of houses.

Interviews with current or ex-owners of traditional houses were conducted in order to:

- Construct the living patterns of typical traditional Ḥedjāzī families in and outside the house.
- Establish the degrees of privacy in and outside the traditional house, through the understanding of a recognized system, one which was considered to be the norm of each locality.
- Determine the traditional position of actual clients before, during and after the construction of the house in order to clarify the nature of the designer/builder-client relationship and the levels of communication between them.

#### **4.2. Procedure and techniques**

The investigation was carried out on the three main cities of Ḥedjāz; Jeddah, Makkah, and Al-Madinah. The main targets were the historical areas where a number of traditional houses could be studied in their natural settings. Architectural and technical data for demolished buildings were supplied by the Hajj Research Centre at the University of Umm Al-Qura (Makkah/Saudi Arabia), several branches of the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in the three cities, and interested private practices. A total of 550 slides of houses were taken on site, while another 120 slides of the demolished buildings were gathered from different sources (most of which came from an interested architect and a professional photographer who is mentioned later in the chapter), and were duplicated for the aid of the study.

The investigation began by locating living builders and clients (or original households) of these houses as an initial preparation for possible interviews. This was done through personal contacts and recommendations of former clients and/or of local municipalities. Most of the conducted interviews were initiated and attended by four architects besides myself. In acknowledgement of their indispensable assistance, for which I am deeply indebted, I feel bound to mention their names. One of these

architects is Mr Hussain Jar who lives in the old part of the city (in a traditional house that was built in the 1800s AD/1220s AH). His family is well-known in traditional Jeddah because his younger uncle was killed in an infamous fight just after their house was built, because he was praising a bridegroom from his neighbourhood in another territory (*ḥāra*). (This kind of neighbourhood clash known as *ḥārāwiyyah* is explained in chapter seven). The linguistic competence of Mr Ḥussain Jār was of vital importance throughout the interviews which added to the authenticity of the translation from the traditional Ḥedjāzī dialect to the English texts presented in this research.

The second is Mr Ṭalāl 'Oraif, a landscape architect and the son of the former President of the Western Region's district of the Ministry of Post, Telephone and Telex, and the nephew of the ex-mayor of Makkah. He was born in a typical traditional Makkan house and still lives in a multi-family house in the old part of the city. His knowledge of the old towns of Jeddah, Makkah and Taif provided this research with the most accurate and detailed site-tours. His companionship throughout the field-study was indeed indispensable. The third, Mr Sa'ūd Maḥjoub is also a landscape architect and a professional photographer, and a recipient of many local design awards. His slide collection of demolished traditional buildings assisted the *mu'allemin* to identify some of their work and traditional construction techniques. The last of these architects is Mr Khālīd 'Abdou who located the craftsmen and old clients in Al-Madinah, provided a proper milieu for constructive interviews in this conservative city and accommodated the team in his house for a number of days. The troubles he went through to facilitate this work will always be remembered. The presence of these colleagues also assisted to a great extent in the interpretation of *mu'allemin* terminologies and the traditional Ḥedjāzī dialect.

Once the informant's place of residence<sup>4</sup> was determined and appointments were made, the team visited some of the selected informants' houses. It was my intention to have a proper social setting for these interviews to produce variations in the way people could communicate with the team. Instead of asking people about certain information directly, it was the aim to make them feel as if I was listening to

---

<sup>4</sup> In the city of Jeddah, locating and arranging interviews with master builders was the task of Mr Ḥussain Jār, while Mr Ṭalāl 'Oraif located and arranged interviews with the heads of the building guild in the cities of Makkah and Taif. Mr Khālīd 'Abdou located the head of the building guild in Al-Madinah and arranged for interviews with him before the team travelled to the city.



them talking about it in an ordinary conversation. One of the main concerns at this point was the unobtrusive introduction of the tape-recorder so as not to offend the informants<sup>5</sup> or to prevent them from talking freely about their feelings.

The number of the interviewing team (five, including myself) and that of the informants at any one session simulated the atmosphere of a social visit where several people participated, correcting and supplementing each other's memory recollection, rather than a formal interview. The fact that the major bulk of those interviews took place during the holy month of Ramaḍān, when social gatherings were common and welcome daily occurrences, guaranteed the presence of a good number of friends and relatives in all interviews<sup>6</sup>. The sense of community that people share in such settings was at its best and was frequently expressed in talking amongst themselves about the shared past while the interviewing team were mere listeners.

Therefore, in most cases the meeting took place in a common family living room, and was sometimes attended by relatives or friends from the informants' side. Those individuals either assisted in explaining what the informant(s) wanted to say or helped them to recollect their memories (especially in the cases of very old informants). For further elaboration on specific technical data, site-visits with the elder designer and builder were conducted in several occasions which provided insights into attitudes towards different places, spaces and other features of houses. During these visits, interviews with present house occupiers were conducted, and their remarks were recorded as to the suitability of these traditional buildings to their present lifestyles.

Although all the interviews were based on a structured, predetermined set of questions which were developed in certain categories, most of these questions were open-ended to allow for a free flow of unanticipated information. The aim of this was

---

<sup>5</sup> The notion of tape-recording people's personal recollections and opinions is - socially - not readily acceptable.

<sup>6</sup> Most of these settings involved individuals who shared historical experiences of traditional Hedjāz. Aspects of the past that were held in common constituted a major part of these individuals' lives and thoughts. The sense of the traditional community was heightened when local narratives were recounted about a variety of subjects. Some of those individuals chose not to be included in the conversation while the majority took the liberty of involving themselves in the discussion, either to confirm the accounts of each other, commenting on certain aspects from personal experience of presenting different points of view. In cases where opinions differed, only those confirmed by the majority are included in the research as factual representative points of view.

not to deprive myself of potentially important insights into the subject at hand and the informants' feelings about it. It also allowed the respondent to elaborate, clarify and reinterpret his own descriptions. The final aim was that the resulting conversation followed the course prescribed by the interviewing team rather than the person being interviewed. The target data involved two major categories: **a)** subjective questions aiming at the determination of the respondents attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, opinions, and expectations on both traditional and contemporary houses; and **b)** special emphasis was given to factual data seeking objective information concerning the respondent and his characteristics, his origin and background, his lifestyle in his own environment, his social interaction with others, and explanation of his behaviour towards both traditional and modern periods.

Almost all interviews and site-visits depended on obtaining as many tape-recorded interviews as necessary, as well as sketches and photographs which were utilized as visual aids to the interviewees. To this effect, the reader will notice that there is almost an over-simplified use of graphics in the following chapters. This simplicity stemmed from the fact that most of these sketches were based on descriptions of the building process of Jeddah and Al-Madinah during the initial meetings with the *mu'allemin*. These sketches were then shown to them on following meetings for modifications, further elaboration and final approval. Because of my doubts that my respondents could understand technical or orthographic projections, metric projections were relied on as the best possible alternative for this undertaking.

A typical interview lasted an average of one hour and thirty minutes, most of which was tape-recorded, sketched or written. Each registered and taped interview material was then transcribed word for word in a separate dated file which included comments and further required action. In case of obtaining an appointment with the informants for a second meeting, organisation of the information gathered in each interview according to chronology or topical category was prepared along with a list of further question or elaboration on sketches were made ready for the informant's opinion. This facilitated the process of interpreting what people said in congruence with their own concepts of what was historically significant.

The material gathered in these interviews included traditional historical narratives inherited from earlier generations, personal reminiscences; family stories;

proverbs; anecdotes about local residents and events; local ballads; and legends of local heroes, geographical landmarks,...etc. To evaluate the veracity of the obtained oral tradition, two methods were used: the first was through internal tests which evaluated the material in terms of its own self-consistency, and the other was through external tests which gained from the approval of more than one person to the same facts. The presence of the oral tradition in the repertoires of more than one informant within the building guild or the community was one means by which authenticity was assured (this was achieved by the repetition of the questions to a number of persons or by having a sort of communal interviews where a number of local builders and their apprentices were present). Furthermore, the existence of physical evidences to the testimony of an informant was enough to verify the authenticity of his accounts. An example of this was the existence of a house which was suspended (a restoration techniques that is described in chapter six) for restoration with all the wooden supports used in the process being buried in the walls of that house.

In general, priority of recorded information was given to the most experienced of builders, or to those residents who were recommended to me by other craftsmen for their factual authenticity. It was the aim, however, that the potential of factually unreliable traditions expressing values, beliefs and attitudes towards the past should not be overlooked. Other intangibles that influenced people's perceptions of the present were as important to the research as actual events in interpreting these information.

Translation of these interviews was kept as direct as possible. Tapes were transcribed verbatim and then were edited to remove false starts and hackneyed expressions, words and phrases (e.g., *as you know, my son*). While minor attempts were made to reproduce the authentic sounds of the regional accent, the traditional Ḥedjāzī dialect was not altered or standardized into classical Arabic so as not to demean the original speaker or mislead the native reader. Instead, traditional proverbs were phonetically reproduced in English<sup>7</sup>, followed by the translation of the proverb which could be readily comprehensible for most. This way ensured that the direct interpretation of the Ḥedjāzī cultural environment - which made possible a coherent, meaningful and valued way of life for those who share the dialect - comes forth.

---

<sup>7</sup> Quotations were transcribed directly into English with the least attention being paid to the standard rules of grammar.

It remains to mention that in most cases, permissions from informants to use tape-recorded materials were obtained. A number of families, however, requested that their names should not be mentioned or that taped interviews should remain confidential to be used only by me. One client refused to have his interview recorded - otherwise he will not be interviewed or that his answers will be formal and very limited, while another household requested that the tape itself should be returned to them after the transcription was made. I fully respected the wishes of my interviewees.

#### **4.3. Limitations and advantages**

The degree of completion of this investigation varied from one city to the other for a variety of reasons (e.g., the unavailability of documented buildings, the age of the respondents and their ability to communicate effectively, administrative difficulties). Only a younger designer/builder in the city of Taif was located (aged 51), and none of the buildings he designed, built, assisted in or witnessed its construction remained today (demolished for rehabilitation). This was the main reason for omitting the city of Taif from this research, although considered amongst the major cities of the Ḥedjāz region. On the other hand in modern Jeddah, the last head of the builders' guild was still alive (aged 96) at the time of the interview and was capable of conducting lengthy interviews, giving very clear and detailed information and was able to conduct several site-visits to houses which he designed and built.

As mentioned earlier, because of the severe lack of documentation regarding the traditional building process and the building guild of Ḥedjāz, it was determined that this part of the research will be based entirely on material from memory as the only source of information upon which to draw. One of the main stumbling difficulties in using orally-communicated information is the uncertainty of which oral information is important and ought to be recorded. In addition to being unsure about questions of the accuracy of orally-communicated history (since it is historically unverifiable), I was often at a loss as to how to interpret this material. This resulted in more and lengthier interviews (see appendix A for more details about the advantages and limitations of these interviewees).

#### 4.4. The informants

The following chapters of the research are primarily based - unless otherwise specified - on a number of interviews (dated from the 6th to the 15th of April - 1990) with *mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin<sup>8</sup>. Interviews and site visits with him helped in the preparation of the data base needed for the completion of many of the following chapters. *Mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ - may God forgive him and bless his soul - died on September, 1991 after a short coma in the city of Jeddah at the age of 97. At the time of the interviews, he was the oldest living member of the last generation of traditional builders/designers in the old city of Jeddah, and the Western Region of Arabia; Ḥedjāz. He was reputed for being consistently and conscientiously accurate in recounting oral traditions<sup>9</sup>. He was also very fit, physically, to attend a number of site- visits that could be likened to guided tours into the 19th century Ḥedjāz (the 13th AH). He was also a man who not only lived in traditional Ḥedjāz but helped design and build it (and, apparently, was more than a little nostalgic towards it). His interpretations of his own life experience in the building craft furnished this research with the whys and hows of traditional building forms, and the way they were processed within the particular socio-cultural context of Ḥedjāz during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Descriptions of the building process in the city of Al-Madinah are also included where they differed from that of Jeddah and Makkah. In such cases, these descriptions are based on a number of interviews (dated from the 25th to the 30th of April - 1990) with *mu'alle*m Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rīfī (born 1930 AD/1350 AH), who is also the last *sheikh* of the building guild of Al-Madinah (appointed in 1963 AD/1383 AH until today). *Mu'alle*m al-Rīfī come from a generation of builders. His father and grandfather, for example worked in the construction of one of Al-Madinah's most famous and handsome buildings, known as *al-'Anbariyyah* station. During site-visits with *mu'alle*m al-Rīfī, the interviewing team was shown houses that were built by his father, grandfather and great grandfather, most of which were in very good

---

<sup>8</sup> He was also known as *raiyyis* Şaḍaqaḥ. The word *mu'alle*m means 'teacher/educator', while *raiyyis* means 'chief, leader or president.' Within the building guild, these two words were synonymous to 'master.'

<sup>9</sup> *Mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin was recommended by *mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ 'Olaimī and several other craftsmen and master-builders long before interviews were arranged with him.



conditions (three out of the eight inspected houses were built more the 300 years ago). Two of *mu'alletm* al-Rīfī's sons are architects (the third is a doctor), but - much to his regret<sup>10</sup> - none of them worked with him or gained from his building experience.

Both *mu'alletmīn* (Karkāchin and al-Rīfī) referred to the various building techniques and terminologies as they were practised and used in the three major cities of Ḥedjāz: Makkah, Jeddah and Al-Madinah<sup>11</sup>. These references either confirmed the recollections of one another, or added some valuable supplementary information to this research. Questions to both *mu'alletmīn* comprised all the categories entitled in the following chapters, and a number of open-ended questions concerning typical days in their lives, as well as that of typical Ḥedjāzī families. The *mu'alletmīn* also related a number of morality tales which involved old Ḥedjāzī legends, myths and even verses from the holy Qur'ān and the Prophet's *Aḥādīth* (*n.sing.* *Ḥadīth* = teachings) in the form of folk-stories. These helped to produce an image of these men and of the traditional Ḥedjāzī lifestyles, beliefs, norms and folklore of the period.

In the city of Jeddah, other *mu'alletmīn* were interviewed, like *mu'alletm* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī (aged 53) who acted as the advisor and consultant to the interviewing team. Interviews with him were conducted from 29th to the 30th of March, 1990. *Mu'alletm* 'Olaimī was of great help in the interpretation and elaboration of ambiguous terminologies, implicit connotations and submerged meanings and other traditional technical jargons used by *mu'alletm* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin. He also assisted in answering some of the sensitive social questions that *mu'alletm* Karkachin did not fully elaborate on. His name was not mentioned when his information overlapped with *mu'alletm* Karkachin's, but was otherwise stated.

It is my feeling that the unification of information sources would help in the general organization and description styles as well as in the interpretation of the sometimes enigmatic metaphors used by the *mu'alletmīn*. The interview sessions with *mu'alletm* Ṣaḍāqah were longer and more frequent than any of the other interviews.

---

<sup>10</sup> "People of Al-Madinah are *ahil ṣan'ah* [craftsmen by nature], as soon as one's son(s) completed his ḥadīth and Qur'ān studies, his father would immediately take him to the building site to teach him something to benefit from in his life...at least that is what my family did with me...however, my highly educated sons denied me this pleasure." (*Mu'alletm* Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rīfī, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Both *mu'alletmīn* practised in the four main Ḥedjāzī cities of Makkah, Jeddah, Al-Madinah and Taif.



This resulted in a familiarity with the terminologies used by the *mu'alle*m, his gestures, narrative style, meanings and intentions, which, in turn, produced more accurate and reliable interpretation of materials obtained from him.

Apart from specialized builders and craftsmen of Ḥedjāz, a number of families living or lived in traditional houses during the period of study were also interviewed and the materials obtained from those interviews are used in this research. The basic criteria of choosing 'non-professionals' as interviewees were: **a)** The family should have owned and maintained a traditional house for a long period of time - ten years being the minimum; **b)** habitation of one owning family was the primary purpose of the house structure; and **c)** the house was occupied by at least a single family.

While these hypothetical conditions were not easily met, I was fortunate to locate two prime sources. The main sources were: 'Afīf family (March 12, 1990) and al-Makkī family (May 18, 1990). Both families, 'Afīf and al-Makkī, qualified as reliable sources for the completion of this part of the research for a number of reasons: members of both families lived for a number of years in the cities of Makkah, Jeddah and Al-Madinah and had relatives in these cities; most of the members of these families also maintained family houses in at least two of these cities, and were always in contact with the major cities of Ḥedjāz for the past 90 years. Finally, The grandparents of both families were alive at the time of these interviews and were consulted on regular basis. Because the interviews with the members of each of these families were communal, where each member expressed his or her belief about one aspect of the living and building process or another, they are referred to in this research by the family name rather than by the name of an individual member giving the interview. This, I believe, is a more justified approach as it was difficult to distinguish between the exact opinion of each member.

The fact that the accounts of building processes and lifestyles are consistent with other families and builders make these recollections from persons who grew up in the cultural milieu in which the tales are passed along by word of mouth, lends considerable credence to them. However, to respect their wishes not to be mentioned in this work, the surnames of most of these families were replaced by pseudonyms. Also, names of informants were omitted where information obtained from the main source - *mu'alle*m Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin - were repeated or not added to by others.

Therefore, and for reasons of simplification, *mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin remains the principle informant of this research (covering the cities of Jeddah, Makkah and Yanbu where he carried out his work). In cases of communal interviews when a number of community members contributed to the discussion and approved by *mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ, his name is referred to as the source of such information. Personal information about him is limited to what I was permitted by him to record. *Mu'alle*m Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rīfī is considered to be the principle informant for the city of Al-Madinah. Respecting his wishes, only his name is mentioned in this work while all his personal details are omitted.



Fig. 4.1. *Mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin briefing the author during a site visit (Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

#### 4.4.1. About *mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin

*Mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin was born in Jeddah in 1894 AD/ 1314 AH and died in 1991 AD/1411 AH. His family name and his facial features suggested that he was of Burmese (Kachin state) or southeast Asian origin, although he recalled his grandfather calling one of his masons in a clear Ḥedjāzī tongue: "*Qa'id al-ḥadjar zaī al-nāss yā wād* [Align that stone properly boy]."<sup>12</sup> He also recalled the blazing-hot days he spent on building sites, when he was a ten years old trainee apprentice, addressing his father as *mu'alle*m Aḥmad like the rest of the building team.

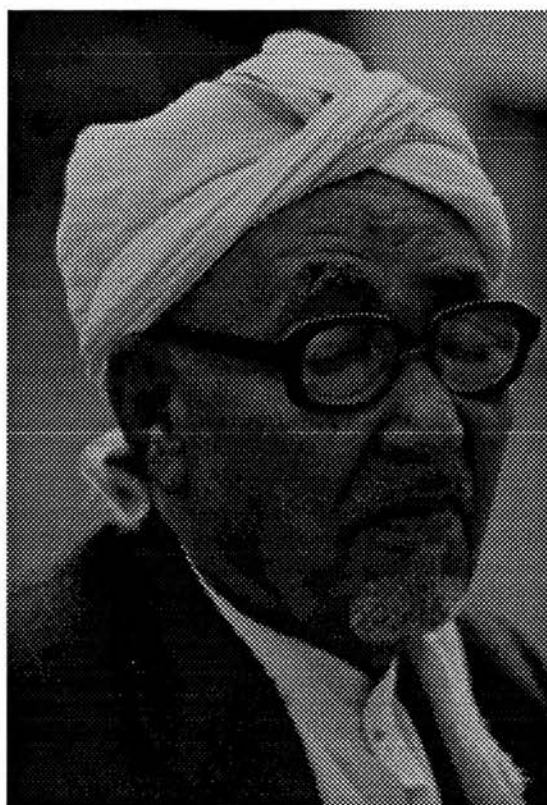


Fig. 4.1. *Mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ Karachin (Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

*Mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ lived in *Al-Hindāwiyyah* neighbourhood, which is today the natural extension of the traditional *Ḥārat al-Baḥar* neighbourhood of Jeddah, in the house he built with concrete to prove to himself and his former colleagues that "a genuine *mu'alle*m can knit with a donkey's foot."<sup>13</sup> *Mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ also built one of the surviving masterpieces of traditional architecture in Jeddah today. It was originally to be built for *al-sharīf*<sup>14</sup> Mihanna al-'abdalī<sup>15</sup> in *Ḥārat al-Shām* (within the walls and to the

<sup>12</sup> While *mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ did not fully elaborate on the issue of his family origin, a number of speculations by other *mu'alle*mīn suggested that his family might have moved to Ḥedjāz from the state of **Karak**, or the island of **Krakatau** in Indonesia.

<sup>13</sup> *Mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 6, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> As discussed in chapter one, *sharīf* literally meaning honourable or distinguished, for being descendants of Ḥasan, the son of 'Alī, the Prophet's nephew.

<sup>15</sup> According to *mu'alle*m Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, (Jeddah, April 6, 1990), this particular house remained controversial in the city of Jeddah for a number of years for many reasons, the most important of which were its almost symmetrical design, unconventional use of balconies in the façade (at the time of its construction) instead of the usual *rawāshīn* (bay-windows) and the "total interference of the *sharīf* in every

north of the old city) by another *mu'allem* known as Abu-Zaid. This *mu'allem* began the *sisan* (foundation work) but a disagreement between him and the Turkish *sharīf* led to his dismissal from the project. *Mu'allem* Şaḍāqah was recommended to the *sharīf*, who assigned him the job on the next day:

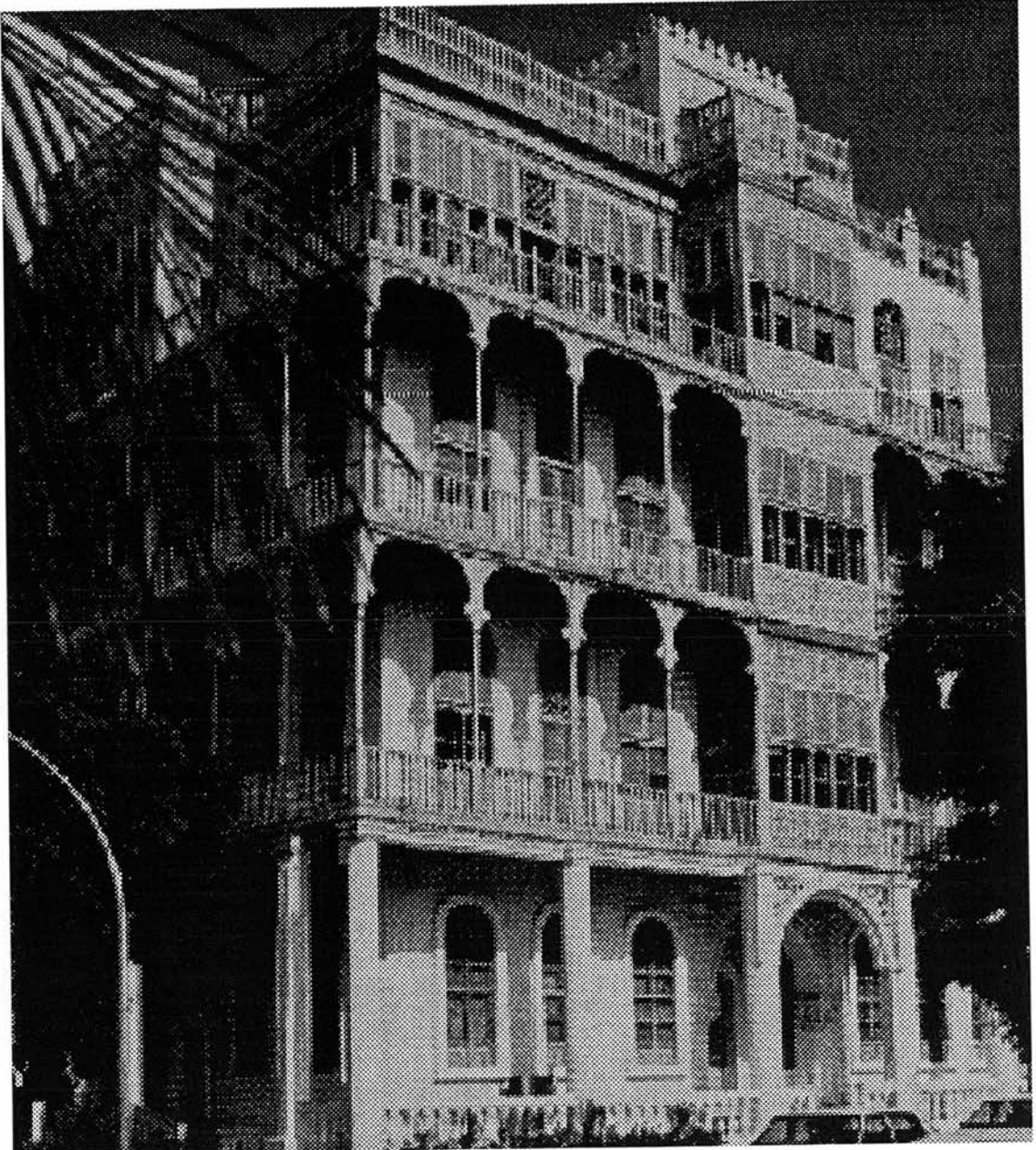


Fig. 4.3. The Shurbatli family house in Jeddah.

---

aspect of design." The *mu'allem* - who described the *sharīf's* design ideas as *dakhilah* (alien) - believed that the *sharīf* wanted the house to be modeled after the large Ottoman Cairene mansions.



The *sharīf* wanted the best craftsmen to build this house for him, he also wanted it to be a model on its own in order to make it different from the ordinary houses of Jeddah. *Mu'alle*m Abu-Zaid qualified for the job because he was a great builder with long experience. Working with him was a carpenter *mu'alle*m from Taif called *mu'alle*m Ḥasan Ṭaifī. The Turkish *sharīf* disagreed with *mu'alle*m Abu-Zaid because the *sharīf* specified a lot of details, and Abu-Zaid being a great *mu'alle*m did not like the idea of somebody dictating to him even if he was the Turkish *amīr* himself. The *sharīf* asked *mu'alle*m Ḥasan in a 'broken' [weak] Arabia accent: *yā Ḥassan*, can you name the second best *mu'alle*m in 'Judda,' and if he is as good as you say, I will give him a new car when he finishes as well as the annual cost of running it and you will receive the same. I happened to be young at the time, and when the *sharīf* saw me, he did not think I could do it, but he trusted *mu'alle*m Ḥasan and thank God I did not let any of them down. But instead of the car, I asked for its price and I got it. I have



Fig. 4.4. A surviving masterpiece: the Naṣīf family house in Jeddah.

been in great public demand ever since. (*Mu'alletm Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 6, 1990).

The ownership of this house had passed through a number of prominent Jeddah families until it was bought by al-Shurbatī family who are the current owners of the house. *Mu'alletm Şaḍaqaḥ* also renovated and restored a number of surviving buildings, the oldest and most famous of which is the Naṣīf family house in *Ḥārat al-Yaman*, which is part of *Ḥārat al-Baḥar* where *mu'alletm Şaḍaqaḥ* was born and where he lived for most of his life. He did this job when he was the appointed *mu'alletm* for the Zahrān and the Naṣīf families. This was the house in which in 1925 AD/1344 AH King Abdul Aziz (*ṣulṭān* of Najed at the time) was received for the first time in Ḥedjāz shortly before the unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia<sup>16</sup>. The King lived in this house for the two years before he became the King of Ḥedjāz.

Fifty years ago, *mu'alletm Şaḍaqaḥ* owned four workshops which produced ready-cut *ḥadjar baḥarī* and *manqabī*<sup>17</sup>, and two workshops for mixing *nūrah* (Lime-powder)<sup>18</sup>. He also owned one of the largest plots of land in the southern part of Jeddah. He paid 7000 Riyals for 500,000 m<sup>2</sup> (7000 Riyals = £ 1077 today). This piece of land exists today as an industrial estate known as *Baraḥat Al-Karkachin* (land of *al-Karkachin*) after him, in the technical development region of the city.

He was a very intelligent, observant and active man, who displayed a good knowledge of today's building technology, design, administrative and legal limitations.

---

<sup>16</sup> Al-Saqqāff house, was the second house to be occupied by King Abdul Aziz when he first entered Makkah in the same year.

<sup>17</sup> *Ḥadjar baḥarī* = hard greyish blocks cut out from 'Madrepore' which are various stony reef-building corals of the Red Sea and other tropical seas. These were excavated from the shallow waters of the Red Sea coast in the city of Jeddah. *Ḥadjar manqabī* = Coral-reef limestone: a limestone composed of reef-forming coral/coralline (resulting from the consolidation of coral-reefs). This type of stone was excavated from the *Manqabah* lagoon to the northwest of the Jeddah. Both types had to be cut and shaped into blocks for building by specialized craftsmen (See chapter six for more details).

<sup>18</sup> The term *nūrah* was used to allude to 'mortar' while, in fact, it was of many types. For example, there is *nūrah ṭabī'aiyyah* (natural mortar = mud), *nūrah baladī* (lit. local mortar = artificially-composed lime = crushed limestone = Ca CO<sub>3</sub>), and *nūrah afrandjī* (lit. foreign mortar = cement = a mix of alumina, silica, lime, iron, oxide, and magnesia). The most common type used throughout Ḥedjāz was the *nūrah baladī*. The techniques of producing *nūrah baladī* depended on the mixing of clay, different types of lime, crushed limestone and loam. These would be cooked together for a number of days and then crushed to a powder component or cut to different shapes and used as bricks for wall construction (especially in Makkah and Al-Madinah).



He also seemed to have a well-grounded religious education, which he gained from listening to the *ḥakāwātī* (storyteller) on the streets and coffee-houses of old Jeddah. Most of the *ḥakāwātī*'s recitals of the Qur'ānic verses and the prophet's teachings were actually rendered in their classical form but were narrated by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah as folk-tales in colloquial form and not in their genuine religious formats. These religious sources were mixed with social non-religious norms and beliefs, without recognizing a dividing line between the two. This socio-religious amalgam was always referred to by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah as *taqālīd al-ḥāra* (traditions of the neighbourhood), or *taqālīd al-Ḥedjāz*, or simply *'ādātanā wa taqālīdanā* (our habits and traditions).

Through the course of presenting the lifestyles, beliefs, values, norms and other aspects of the traditional Ḥedjāzī society, more information is revealed about - and by - *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin as well as the other *mu'allemīn* and family members. This data comprise an important part of the research as it illustrates the ideology of authentic representatives of the traditional Ḥedjāzī culture.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE BUILDING GUILD

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE BUILDING GUILD

---

#### Introduction

The traditional *mu'allemin* of Ḥedjāz operated within a certain code of ethics and basic requirements, and these had a direct role on the process of producing the house as well as the final product. Therefore, it is vital to present the nature, structure, role, authority and obligations of the building guild before attempting to describe the process of producing the house in traditional Ḥedjāz which is presented in chapter six.

The picture presented here provides only a glimpse of the nature of the building guild, intended to familiarise the reader with the various aspects of traditional institution. As the research progresses, the reader will gain new insights into the extent of influence that the guild had on the process of producing a house. This would include the maintenance of the prevailing Ḥedjāzī traditions, maintenance of congruence between culturally-accepted norms and the pace of introducing new ideas and building models, and the role of the building guild as an association of other related guilds and crafts (e.g., the carpenters' guild).

#### 5.1. The nature and organization of the building guild

The traditional building guild was a community within a community. As this chapter illustrates, it had its own rules and regulations and a strict code of ethics, all of which were well known to its members. It also had an acknowledged hierarchy. The principal figure in the building guild was *sheikh al-mu'allemin* (the leader of master-builders). His was an elected position based on his professional reputation, his social esteem and his personal qualities, and he was usually a very senior craftsman. He presided over the number of groups, or building teams - *'omāl*, *ṣobiyyān*, or *ṣanāi 'aiyyah* - along with their *mu'allemin*<sup>1</sup> of which the building guild consisted.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hurgronje, during his visit to the region in 1884, stated that black Nubian slaves (northeastern African) "were employed in the hardest work of building, quarrying, etc..[They] also have generally begun in the work of 'stones of mortar'..[they were] hired out by their owners to the builders and others...after their

Each of these separate teams was under the direct control of a *mu'allemin* (master) whose *ṭabaqah* (*n.pl. ṭabaqāt* = rankings) in the guild would influence the size of the project he was offered, the number of wealthy patrons he attracted or his share of any undertaking. Likewise, the rankings of particular members of the building crew would reflect their status within the guild and influence that in the community. It would also determine their relative level of payment within the team.

A typical building-team which a *mu'allemin* or *raiyyis* directed was composed of a foreman (who was also known as *raiyyis*), a *garārī*, *naḥḥāt* (masonry carver, engraver)<sup>2</sup>, *murawidj* (assistant mason), *ṭaiyyān*, *khalāṭ* (mortar-mixer), *minawil* (stone or mortar-porter), and a number of *fallātīn* (*n.sing. fallātī* = apprentices). These occupations ranked in that order within the guild while seniority was recognized within a particular occupation depending on length and extent of experience. The professions of *nadjār* (carpenter), *ḥadād* (blacksmith) and *nawwār*, *mubaiyyeḍ* (painter, plasterer), had separate status as affiliates to the building craft. Carpenters were of three categories: Furniture makers, doors and windows-makers and boat-builders. They all belonged to the carpenters guild (*nadjārīn*) and they had their own *sheikh*, and the same could be said about the *ḥaddādīn*. (Fig. 5.1.)

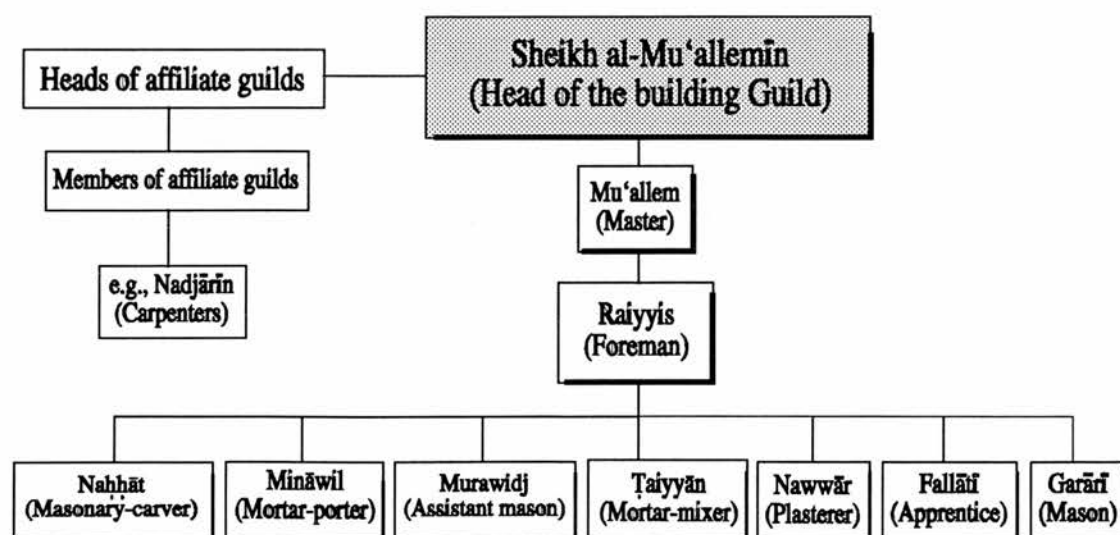


Fig. 5.1. Organization and ranking of the building guild.

liberation, they seek employment as day labourers." This has also been confirmed by my informants. See Hurgronje, C. Snouck. *Mekkah in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*. Trans. J. H. Monahan. London: Luzac and Co., 1931. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Also known as *ḥadjārīn* or *garārīyyah* (stone-cutters).

It is known to the *mu'allemin* of Ḥedjāz that most Ḥedjāzī *nadjārīn*, especially those who specialized in the making of *rawāshīn*, learned their craft from Indian and Egyptian masters during the Ḥadj season (the annual pilgrimage to the Holy Mosque of Makkah). Those masters use to work for local builders for the three months of the Ḥadj season until it was time for their ships to leave back to their original countries. Their Ḥedjāzī apprentices followed, to a great extent, their techniques and their wood-carving styles and patterns which are evident on most remaining houses.

Although the daily pay-scale for the various occupations were decided upon by the head of the building guild, the *mu'allemin* himself decided the relative worth of his own crew members according to their specialization, rank, seniority or particular experience and ability to handel physically demanding tasks. For example, in a certain locality like the city of Jeddah, some building material, like stone excavated from the sea bed - *ḥadjar baḥarī* - were very difficult to cut and shape. The handling of this material was time-consuming (a day to cut and shape three stones, a day to lay-down four), and only a few builders specialized in this type of building. The same may be said of Makkah and Al-Madinah. In these cases the choice lay - as discussed in the following chapter - with *ḥadjar Jabalī*, *baladī* (local mountain-stone), *bollokāt ṭīn* (mud-bricks), *ḥadjar zaraīyyqī*, *amlas* (smoothed and carved blue-stone), *ṭūb ramlī* (free-stone), or *ṭūb aḥmar* (red-brick). The hardest to deal with was the mountain-stone.

The following is a list of the daily pay-scales applicable to the separate occupations at the end of last century. Although, of course, currency values would have fluctuated throughout the period of this study, according to *mu'allemin* Ṣaḍaqaḥ the relative levels of payments between occupations remained fairly constant. Again, it should be borne in mind that a worker's placement on his particular occupational daily wages was at the discretion of the *mu'allemin*:

*Mu'allemin* = from 40 Piasters up to 18 Riyal (360 Piasters).

*Garārī* = 20 P. up to 8.5 Riyal (170 Piasters = 9 *Qerṭās*)<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> One *Riyal* = one *Qerṭās* (dialect) = 20 piasters. The monetary units used under the Turks were *Riyal Madjīdī* (Turkish crown= silver riyal= 25 of today's Saudi riyal= £ 3.8 today), *Sharak* or *Jinaih Jordj* which was a British half crown or guinea bearing the image of St. George (seven to ten silver riyal = 250 Saudi riyal = £ 38.5 today's value). A guinea - according to the Webster's Third Dictionary of the Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., (London, 1981) - is an English gold coin issued from 1663 to 1813 and fixed in 1717 as the

*Murawidj* = 17 P. up to 7 Riyal (140 P).

*Ṭaiyyān* = 15 P. up to 5 Riyal (100 P).

*Mināwil* = 9 P. up to 5 Rial (100 P).

*Fallātī* = 9 P. up to 4.5 Riyal (90 P)<sup>4</sup>.

*Nadjār* = 25 P. up to 10 Riyal (200 P).

*Mubaiyyeḍ* = 19 P. up to 9 Riyal (180 P).

The *mu'allem* would select his building-team members as children (recruiting his own, of course, if it were a family business) and teach them all they needed to know of their craft just as he had been taught by his own *mu'allem* and by his own experience. Each *mu'allem* had a particular speciality, the higher skills of which he would teach only to his own sons or close relatives. For example, in Jeddah, the 'Atiyyah family were renowned carpenters and the Karkachin family were specialists in the restoration of faulty building by suspension technique known as *ta'līq al-bait* (which is described in chapter six), and so on.

A worker might occupy a particular grade for a considerable time. For example, in the case of a *garārī*, this could be up to ten years before his *mu'allem* could upgrade him to the rank of *raiyyis* (foreman) or in pay-scale. The craftsman would, of course, be anxious to learn as much as possible from his *mu'allem* and as quickly as possible in order to improve his chances of promotion and thereby his earnings and status within the guild. During this period he would have to show the highest respect to his *mu'allem* and work to the best of his knowledge and ability to prove his worthiness. Moreover, there are no known examples whatsoever of a craftsman missing a step in the ladder of promotion; lengthy experience at each level was an absolute requirement.

Eventually, when the *mu'allem* felt able to rely sufficiently upon his team, he might leave the detailed supervision of the construction work to his best hand whilst retaining responsibility for overall direction and co-ordination of activity himself, and

---

equivalent of 21 shillings. It was equivalent to 22 karat from which guineas were coined. A guinea also refers to the Saudi Arabian sovereign which was first issued in 1951.

<sup>4</sup> In Al-Madinah, the *fallātī* was the equivalent of *mināwil* (stone and mortar-porter) in Jeddah, Makkah, Taif and Yanbu. Because of the high dependency on mud-brick construction in Al-Madinah, the highest wages were amongst the *ṭaiyyānīn* (mortar and mud-mixers) and the *fallātīn* (stone and brick-haulers).



assigning particular tasks as appropriate. In this position he was known as *raiyyis*. Also, if as a result of this the best hand, now foreman, could adequately demonstrate his ability to manage a building team of his own and cope with the responsibilities of the rank, he might be recommended by the *mu'alletem* or by senior members of the guild for promotion to *mu'alletem* himself. (Although by the 1950s the pace and scale of development was beginning to render formal recognition extraneous and many minor *garārīyyah* set themselves up as *mu'alletem* without any kind of endorsement).

All of the Ḥedjāzī cities had a small number of distinguished *mu'alletem*. In *mu'alletem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkachin's time there were seven in Jeddah, five in Makkah, four in Al-Madinah, and two in Yanbu<sup>5</sup>. It was common for the *mu'alletem* of one city to undertake work in another<sup>6</sup> according to the balance of demand and this gave *mu'alletem* a wide knowledge of the different building materials, types and layout throughout the cities of Ḥedjāz. Each of these *mu'alletem* was either retained by one or two of the large merchant families of the area to carry out all of their building and restoration work for a set monthly salary or else exclusively commissioned for particular work in a regular basis. These houses, through the similarity of their characteristics, would bear testimony to his association with such eminent families. Such prestige was of immense value, so much so that during the 1940s, this led to a *ḥanass* (stubborn competition) among *mu'alletem* to entice important families with elaborate - mostly alien - building forms and to the adoption of various unorthodox methods and devices in the hope of establishing the notion - if not the fact - of their irreplaceability in the minds of their clients<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, in Jeddah: *Mu'alletem* Abū-Zaid, Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jamīl Sha'rāwī (from Egypt), Jamīl 'abdū, Serādj Madanī (from Egypt), and Aḥmad Shams (from India). In Makkah: *Mu'alletem* Dandārouh, al-Wazīrah, and Aḥmad 'īd. In Al-Madinah: *Mu'alletem* Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rīfī.

<sup>6</sup> Although it was a full day's donkey ride between Makkah and Jeddah (72 km), and 12 days between Al-Madinah and Jeddah (424 km), it was normal for *mu'alletem* and other craftsmen to be sent from one of these towns to the other for particular tasks. All the *mu'alletem* who were interviewed in this research had work in the major Ḥedjāzī cities at some point in their life.

<sup>7</sup> *Mu'alletem* protected their position with their clients by resorting to complex floor plans where, for example, they concealed the location of staircases, which is discussed in the following chapter. They would also construct the first floor before the completion of the ground floor, so that the owner would not risk dismissing the *mu'alletem* before the project is completed; If the owner of the house happened to dismiss his *mu'alletem*, the new *mu'alletem* would find it difficult to complete the house, and the owner would have to call back the original builder.

In some cases and like a modern design group, there could be more than one *mu'allemin* working on only one house. There were even cases of two or three *mu'allemin* from different regions working on one building. Each of these *mu'allemin* would have his own team but would work under the leadership of the *mu'allemin* who got the work in the first place, or the eldest and most experienced one. *Mu'allemin* Şaḍaqaḥ himself, who was the appointed builder to the largest two families in Jeddah at the time, recalls that he was required to finish a large house within a very short period. To meet the demands of a valued client, he requested the assistance of two senior *mu'allemin* from the guild. These two *mu'allemin* brought their best and most skilled craftsmen so as to "*whiten*<sup>8</sup> my [*mu'allemin* Şaḍaqaḥ's] face in front of my people [his patrons]." Such was the common loyalty and spirit of cooperation among *mu'allemin*.

## 5.2. Authority and obligation of members of the building guild

As mentioned in the preceding section, the highest authority in the guild was the *sheikh or kabir al-mu'allemin* (leader or chief of master-builders). His expertise, wisdom and integrity in professional and personal matters were principal requirements but he had to have the strength of character and the personality to represent these virtues to the authorities on his members' behalf, and to act as guardian of their interests. In matters of interpretation of the guild codes of practice or observance of the rules of procedure, his was the supreme voice.

The leader of the guild had a civic role roughly comparable to a planning authority<sup>9</sup>. He was, for example, by custom empowered to demolish a building or any part of it extruding beyond a given line specified by him and he was responsible for the formulation or alteration of building regulations. During the Ottoman rule of Ḥedjāz (1700s-1800s), the *mu'allemin* - who were known as *aṣḥāb al-khibrah wa al-ma'rifah* (the experts) - were consulted regularly on matters of public disputes

---

<sup>8</sup> To *whiten* his face: to maintain his honour and pride, to make him praiseworthy in front of people, or to show him as a man of his word.

<sup>9</sup> In the social sphere, the authority of *sheikh al-mu'allemin* equalled that of the '*omdah* (leader) of the *ḥāra* who was the highest authority in his neighbourhood. Although the '*omdah* also acted as police, judicial and planning authorities, he was in some cases subordinate to the leader of the building guild.

concerning extensions, privacy intrusion and other building regulatory affairs. This is discussed in later chapters.

The *mu'alle*m was fully responsible for the soundness of the structure of his houses, the behaviour of his workers (whether socially or within the building craft), the completion of his tasks within the specified period of time, the safety of the adjacent buildings and common walls, and compliance with any social restrictions as applied to building such as the protection of neighbours' privacy. He was also responsible for the safety of the building after its occupants had moved in. If the structure of the house *raiyyah*, *wghaz* or *māl* (settled, subsided, or inclined), he was obliged to level the foundations of the building by a special technique known as *ta'liq* (suspension) even if he had to use the experience of another *mu'alle*m.

For a craftsman to join a certain guild (e.g., *nadjārīn*), he had to 'present' himself to the *sheikh* of that guild. A senior craftsman would accompany the candidate for the purpose of *wadjahah* (moral support, prestige) and to personally recommend the prospect guild member to *sheikh al-mu'alle*mīn. The preliminary stage of this process would require the presence of a number of guild members with whom the *mu'alle*m would consult or inquire about the craftsman's reputation, craftsmanship, experience and honesty. If the *mu'alle*m accepted the candidacy of the craftsman, he would call a meeting of all the guildsmen to a *mu'alle*miyyah; a ceremony in which the candidate was customarily accepted as an apprentice to a certain *mu'alle*m. A verbal submission was required from the candidate to his new master. He would have to declare his loyalty and obedience to that *mu'alle*m before God and then the guild members. Those, in turn, would bare witness to this effect. The opening *Sūra* of the holy Qur'ān - *al-Fātiḥah* - would be recited as a seal to a verbal agreement that would remain effective for life. Such was the process of joining any guild in traditional Ḥedjāz.

The new recruit would be addressed as the 'son' of that *mu'alle*m as long as he remained within this particular building team. However, workers in a building team would remain loyal to their *mu'alle*m forever. He had taught them everything they knew, and they followed "*afkarouh wa ṭarīqatouh*" (his ideas, and special building

techniques)<sup>10</sup>. Workers did not receive a salary as such from their *mu'alletm*, but "his bread was theirs."<sup>11</sup> Meaning that their daily wages were only applicable once they were undertaking a certain building task. If no work was offered to their *mu'alletm* for a long time, they would go with the fishermen to excavate *ḥadjar baḥarī* (coral blocks) from the sea bed. They would then cut these rocks and sell them to other *mu'alletmīn*. They could not leave one building team for another except on loan from their *mu'alletm*, perhaps as favour to another *mu'alletm*. No *mu'alletm* could use a worker who had been dismissed from another building team. According to their code of honour, he had to refer him back to his original *mu'alletm*.

This meant that if a *mu'alletm* dismissed one of his workers for whatever reason, this worker would be debarred from working in the building craft for the rest of his life unless his *mu'alletm* relented or a dispensation was granted by the head of the guild. This could only be given after a *jām'īyyah* (tribunal), set up by the leader of the guild on application from a *mu'alletm* or a craftsman had examined the case and reported their findings. In the case of a worker deserting his *mu'alletm*, he would be considered a disowned and ungrateful individual. However, the idea of such an action was totally unacceptable whether on the community level or within the guild. It would, in fact, be regarded widely as an act of betrayal, with all the stigma attached.

Similarly, the *mu'alletm* had to remain loyal to his workers. He had to consult them if he wanted to recruit another worker to the team. He could not discriminate among them (i.e., workers of the same rank) in payments or promote one of them above the others unjustifiably. He had to value them like his own children. At local community festivals and religious celebrations, the *mu'alletm* used to take his *shaqāwiyyah* (hard-working building-crew) to the *qabowah* (market-place) and buy them all their clothes and provisions from the best available (some of these goods were bought on credit to be paid at *mu'alletm's* convenience).

---

<sup>10</sup> Apprentices followed the construction techniques and used the particular building terminologies of their master. Therefore, it is possible to find some expressions that were particular only to a certain building team. Some of these terminologies that were common in Mamluk Egypt and Ottoman Syria were also used in Ḥedjāz by some craftsmen (because of the background of their masters) while other builders only heard about them but never knew their meanings.

<sup>11</sup> *Mu'alletm* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī. Jeddah, March 25, 1990.

In the case of the death of one of the workers, the guild was responsible for the well-being of his family where funds from other members were available, which was usually the case. Neighbours and friends of the deceased's family would contribute funds to the head of the guild for him to add to the monthly relief paid to the worker's family. Although this system of social security was totally voluntary, it survived for a very long period as a social custom and became part of the ethics and obligations of the building guild. Naturally, with the weakening of the guild towards the 1950s, this system collapsed, and financial assistance was given by relatives only.

Towards the 1920s AD/1340s AH, the authority of the guild leader began to diminish, and he was reduced to acting as a building consultant to the local judge. A complaint would be raised to the judge first, who would call the leader of the guild to accompany him to the location in question to assist in the evaluation of the case. This procedure was known as *al-kashfiyyah* (the inspection).

In 1925 AD/1344 AH, the first official 'head of municipality,' or rather municipal controller, was appointed. The leader of the guild remained his assistant until 1934 AD/1354 AH when non-Ḥedjāzī engineers and architects took over the inspection procedures. All *mu'allemin* were then either reduced to advisors to these architects and restoration consultants - whose main task was the preservation of the old town areas besides a few traditional construction jobs - or else left without recognition. Those who did take up employment with the municipalities were able to learn how to cope with the changes in technology and building material and have survived until today. Some are still the municipality restoration consultants.

This process, together with the vast transformation taking place through the pace of modernization signalled the decline of the guild. Moreover, its members confronted these changes in a disunited and confused condition, lacking the leadership they had traditionally expected. Uncertain whether to remain in the guild or to ally themselves with the new institutions, members did both. The emergence of *adjānīb* (foreigners)<sup>12</sup> aggravated the situation even further to impose the final strains on an institution no longer capable of bearing them.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Foreigners* does not just mean non-Ḥedjāzīs (*Ḥūddjuz*, *Ḥedjazīyyīn*), but also natives who did not follow the traditional code of practice, like those who were originally fishermen or small merchants.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PROCESS OF PRODUCING A HOUSE



## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PROCESS OF PRODUCING A HOUSE

---

#### Introduction

As discussed in chapter three, the craftsmen-built houses of traditional Ḥedjāz were neither universal nor were uniform throughout the period of concern to this research. There were also self-built houses (known as *al-shukkol*) that were occupied by low-income families. These were constructed with walls of wooden-posts called *rodoff* and were made of *akhshāb jandal/qandal* (Indian wood) and *nakhīl al-dūm* (dourm-Palm) shipped in from Sudan. There were also small dwellings made out of mud and palm-leaf stalks owned or rented by non-Ḥedjāzī settlers<sup>1</sup>. These types of houses do not, however, lie within the scope of this research<sup>2</sup>. Descriptions of houses or the methods of building them featured in this chapter are based on those constructed by specialist builders - *mu'allemin* - from stones, mud or coral-blocks. As also discussed in chapter three, this type was represented in two size categories: the more typical *sha'bi* (public, ordinary) house; and the relatively larger house or *sarāiyah* (Turkish/Ḥedjāzī for a large house or palace). These two categories were basically very similar, except that larger houses involved foreign craftsmen and building features, used richer materials, required elaborate building techniques, and sometimes planned layouts (i.e., intended symmetry, following certain architectural styles like Ottoman Cairene, Syrian). Larger houses had wider elevations, more floors and large *rawāshīn*. Some of these houses were built larger and larger towards the 20th century and are characterized by their symmetrical layouts and division into smaller apartments for married sons.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, the black African community known as *Nakatū*. These existed outside the city walls of Jeddah (until its removal in 1947 AD/1367 AH by a Royal decree of King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud). See Al-Anṣārī, 'Abdul Qudūss. *Mausū'at Tārīkh Madīnat Jeddah*. [(Arabic) The Encyclopedia of the History of the City of Jeddah]. Cairo: Dār Miṣr Lilṭibā'ah, 1982. (First published 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Nor do the reinforced concrete buildings which were known locally as *ashmonḡī* (the first of which was built in Jeddah in 1929 AD/1348 AH but which were not preferred by the traditional community until some years later) or apartment buildings (the first of which was built by the National Commercial Bank in 1932 AD/1351 AH in the heart of Jeddah).

## 6.1. The design and building processes

The following is a description of the design and building processes of a typical house in Ḥedjāz during the period from 1700-1970 AD/1120-1390 AH. This was the period when the client knew the traditional methods of building construction and overall organization of buildings, but where the craftsman knew them in greater detail and had the necessary skills. Every detail in this section is taken from the accounts and interpretations of *mu'alleṃ* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, the last head of the building guild in the old city of Jeddah since 1947 AD/1367 AH, as discussed in chapter four.

The stages detailed below did not necessarily always take place in exactly the same sequence or manner as that described. These might slightly vary from one *mu'alleṃ* to the other according to their individual 'style,' experience, background<sup>3</sup> or the exigencies of the situation, but for the sake of clarity of understanding, the order and methods of construction have been set out in the most typical and what was under most circumstances, the most rational way<sup>4</sup>. The following programme and its detail was approved by *mu'alleṃ* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin as a reasonable representation of the house production system in Ḥedjāz at the time he was active.

### 6.1.1. *Al-Bedāiyyah* (Initiation)

The process of designing and building a house was initiated by the *ra'ī al-'arḍ, al-zabūn* (owner of the land, client) who would approach the *mu'alleṃ* - usually - in the *qahwa, ṣaḍāqah* (coffee-house) where craftsmen of various guilds gathered every night (Fig.6.2.)<sup>5</sup>. The client chose the *mu'alleṃ* most suitable for his

---

<sup>3</sup> As discussed in chapter nine, each of the traditional *mu'alleṃ* of Ḥedjāz had his own 'way of doing things' in accordance to what he learned from his former *mu'alleṃ* as well as from his own personal experience.

<sup>4</sup> In the beginning, we will have to establish the fact that regional economics, climatic variations and the local availability of building materials have had, to a marked extent, an unescapable influence on the built form and appearance of the Ḥedjāzī cities. Although houses vary slightly throughout the region, it is possible to define a typical house and yet more, a house in the region has a cultural affinity with others of its kind which is more readily sensed than described.

<sup>5</sup> This figure is modified from a sketch by Zanoni, Murray. Old Jeddah, An Impression. London: Arabian Homes Ltd., 1982. 12.

particular requirements. The size of the house and its building materials were the most important criteria in selecting a particular *mu'alletm*. Generalities of the project such as the size of the plot, its location, and perhaps the desired number of *madjālis* and/or *mu'akhkhar*<sup>6</sup> and *adwār* (floors) were discussed at a preliminary meeting over a cup

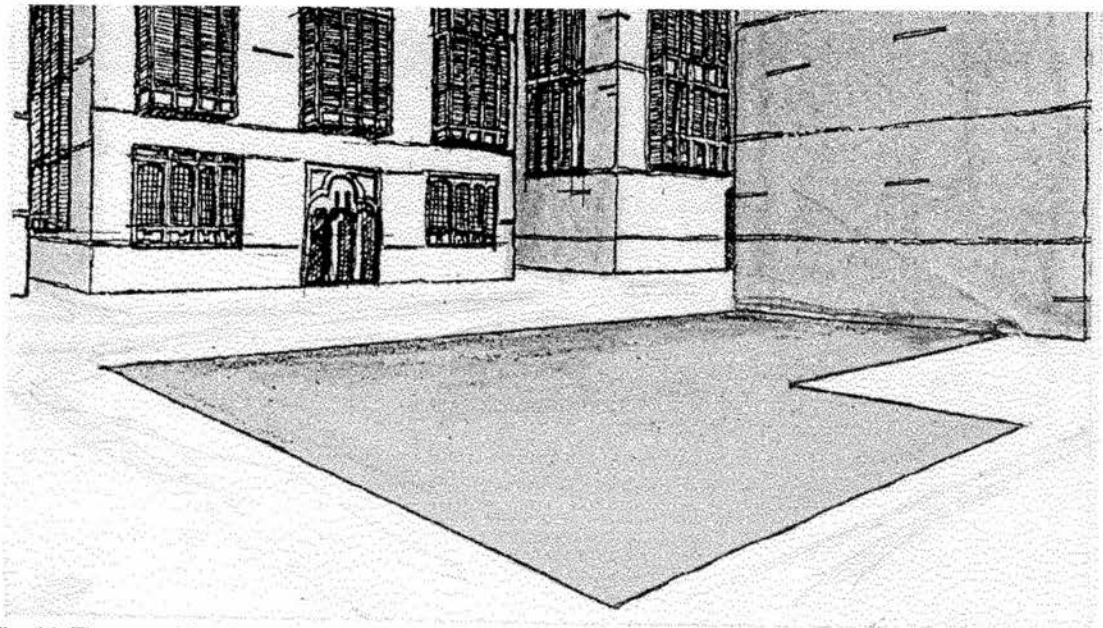


Fig. 6.1. The ground for the prospective house.

of tea..."according to an accepted convention of respectability [the prevailing norms and manners] by clients who would usually approach me and say: *sīd al-mu'alletmīn* [master of master-builders] Ṣaḍāqah: I want two *madjālis* as you would want them, and as you wish [utilizing the best of your taste and craftsmanship].."<sup>7</sup>.

The owner of the land played both the roles of the client and the client representative. This was because he would, in most cases, be the head of an extended family whose requirements and needs would be conveyed to the selected *mu'alletm* through the head of the family. This meeting might lead to a subsequent one, following an agreement in principle.

<sup>6</sup> *Madjlis* was actually a suite comprising a kitchen and a toilet/bathroom, while *mu'akhkhar* consisted of two rooms, a kitchen and a toilet/bathroom. In Al-Madinah the term *makhzan/mukhzan* was equivalent to *madjlis* in Jeddah, Makkah and Yanbu.

<sup>7</sup> *Mu'alletm* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990.

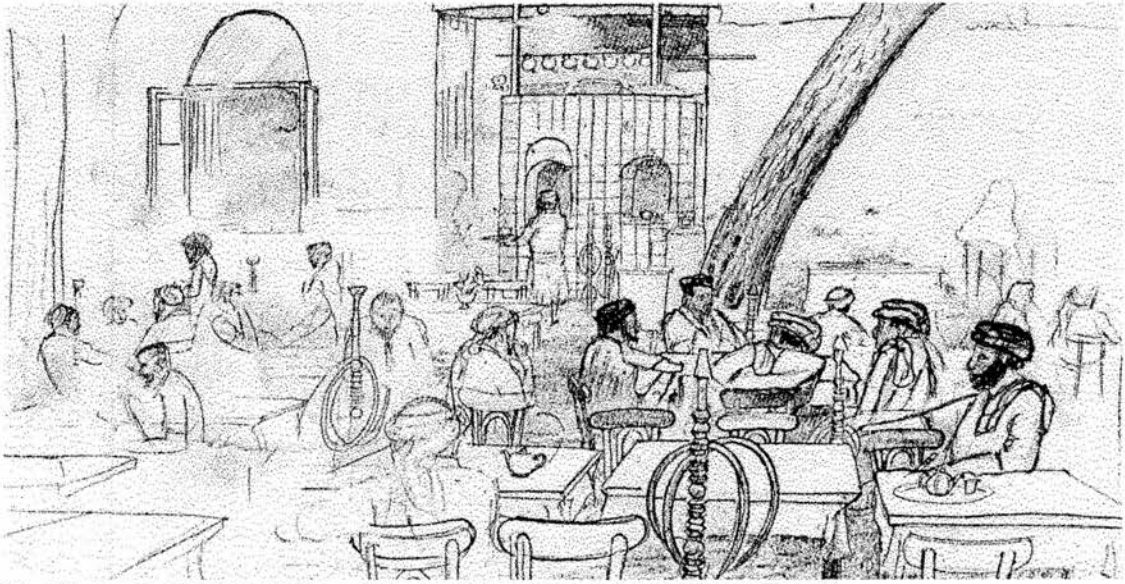


Fig. 6.2. Approaching the suitable *mu'allem* (modified from a sketch by Murray Zanoni).

#### 6.1.2. *Talbīq al-‘arḍ/Fiṣlat al-bait* (Matching the land and the house-image, tailoring the house)

The layout of the house depended on the location of the intended house - as far as the prevailing wind is concerned, size of land, its configuration and soil type. Having determined these variables, the *mu'allem* would proceed with his 'design' by trying to fit or match his perception or 'image' of the prospective house with the potentiality of the land. This second stage in the process is what we would regard today as the 'preliminary design phase.' Most *mu'allemīn* confirmed that they really do not know where they get their ideas from. They look at the piece of land, and would immediately have a picture, an image, of what the desired house would look like. As in day dreaming, they would 'walk around' in their *afkār* (*n. sing. fikrah* = image, picture or idea) and look through the windows of the prospective house:

I looked at my client's face while he was talking to me, and I could see in my imagination him praying with his son in the *madjlis*, and I saying to myself that there should be no *rowshān* with a person sitting inside it while this man is praying...and I blanked out the image of the *rawāshīn* and toilets from the direction of the *qiblah* [Makkah direction]. I sometimes laugh to myself when I think of how I saw a little child playing on my client's back while he was praying...because I knew that his son was not married yet, and this little child was yet to be born. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

Most of them did not always have a complete image of what exactly they are going to build, there were some things that they knew for sure what it is going to look like, or where it was going to be located, like staircases, bathrooms on top of each other and so on. What I gathered is that they might have an idea of how other things might look like, but because they did not want to 'repeat themselves' in every building, they would want to have something look different from one building to the



Fig. 6.3. "I do not always have a complete image of what exactly I am going to build..."

other. Things like the shapes and locations of *rawāshīn* and sometimes the whole *wadjihāh* or *mugadimah* [elevation] would be uncertain. There were some things that they did not have an image for at all until they start working. For example, although they knew that they will have to build *khārdjāt* (terraces), they did not know where would they be built or how they were going to look like until they reach the second floor.

The *mu'allem* drew the ground floor plan in the soil using his wooden-stick (Fig.6.4). This preliminary plan would show the arrangement of rooms, staircases, utilities, entrances and windows. The available flooring supports, consisting of *bittar* (*n.sing. bitrah* = wooden-beams limited to eight meters), imposed restrictions on the area of rooms but this was well understood by both the *mu'allem* and his client and these details were not objected to or questioned. Measurements were all estimated using the length of the *mu'allem's* wooden-stick, which equalled *al-derā 'al-ẓirā' al-mi 'mārī* (cubit = 24 karat/carat = 75-80 cm):

During the days of the Turks [presumably the 1860s] we used as a measurement *al-gedah*, a piece of wood which was about 58 cm in length divided into 18 *gīrāt* [karat], each one being about three centimeters and more (between 3.2 cm and 3.3 cm). (*Mu'allem Şaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).



In Madinah, land was measured with the standard module *Mukhzan* which was a superficial area of 42 m<sup>2</sup>. For example, the client would notify the *mu'allem* that his plot of land was ten *makhāzen*, meaning that its area was 10 x 42 = 420 m<sup>2</sup>. The *mu'allem* would then inform his client that this area could support eight or nine *makhāzen* or rooms. In general, house plot areas ranged from 400 m<sup>2</sup> to 600 m<sup>2</sup>, while

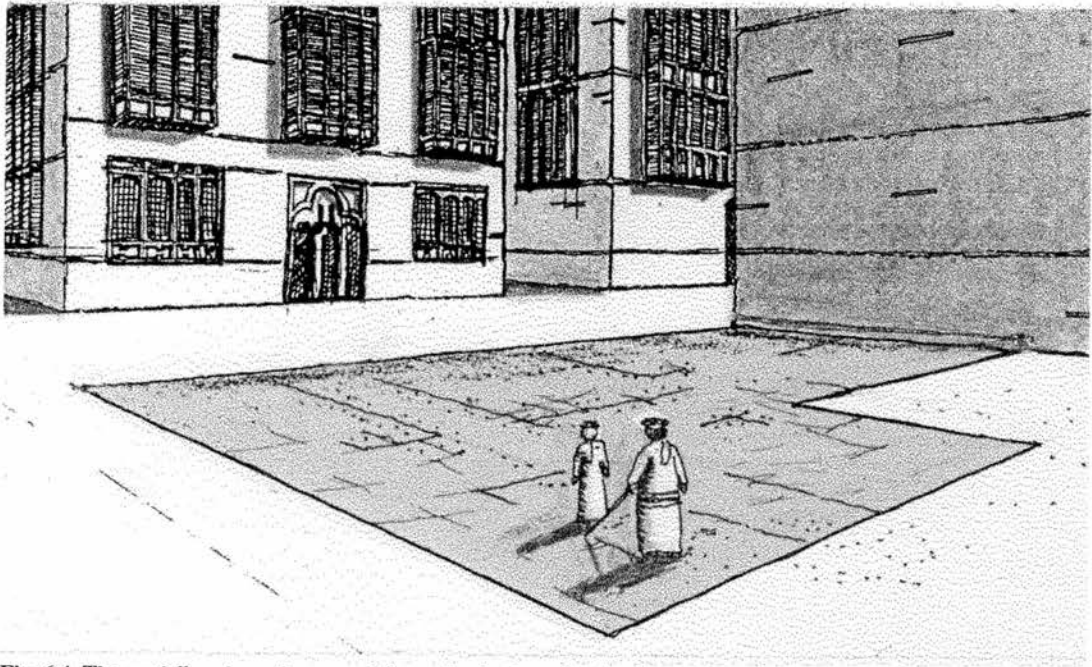


Fig. 6.4. The *mu'allem* drew the ground floor plan in the soil using his wooden-stick during the client-builder preliminary meeting.

the area of an average house ranged from 200 m<sup>2</sup> to 500 m<sup>2</sup>. It was also the norm to specify the size of the house in Al-Madinah and Makkah by the number of *dīwānāt* [reception area] and *dikkāk* (raised platforms for sitting). For example, the client would ask the *mu'allem* to have a house that consists of one *qā'ah bīdakatain* (a reception hall between two raised platforms: Figs. 6.5 & 6.6.)<sup>8</sup>, *dīwān wa mag'ad* (a reception area flanked by a sitting room), or *dīwān bīdakatain* (a reception area with one platform on each side). Another type of rooms was known as *dīwān Makkāwī* (a Makkan style *dīwān* which consisted of one *dikkah* only).

<sup>8</sup> Figures modified from plan and section of a typical traditional house in Al-Madinah by Eyuce, Ahmet T. *Solid and Void Relationship in the Traditional Architecture of the Western Region*. Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, [n.d].



It should be noted that by custom, the client did not dictate the number of floors and their areas, for the convention was that he would wait for the *mu'allem* to suggest the appropriate number - according to his familiarity with the client's family - and then would discuss the matter with the *mu'allem*. The *mu'allem* would also decide the kind of building material to be used, the building techniques, number of elevations, shape of the building, its dimensions and specifications.

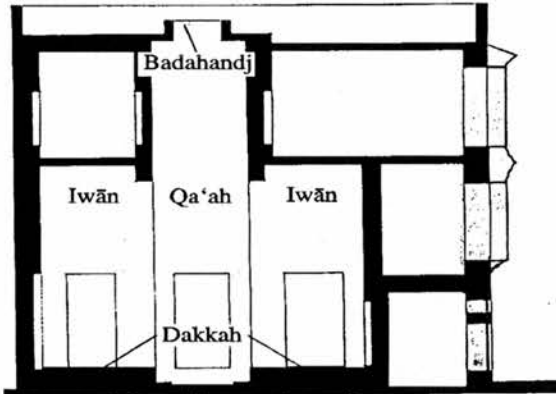


Fig. 6.5. Al-Madinah qā'ah house.

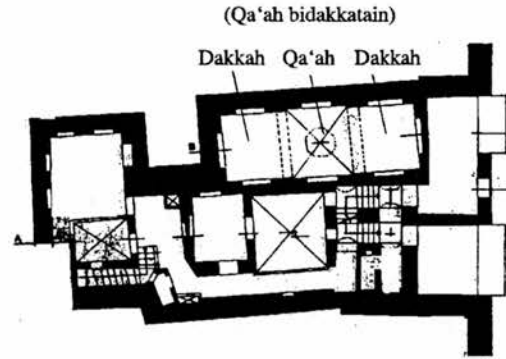


Fig. 6.6. Dīwān Madīnī (Al-Madinah style).

..the owner of the land does not have much to say in the project, the final authority is *al-mu'allem*'s. The client gives you his budget and may suggest to you his desired number of rooms and their areas and then depends on God [leave it to fate and leave the site]. (*Mu'allem Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rifī*, Al-Madinah, March 25, 1990).

As an expert in the art of building, the *mu'allem* would assess the nature of the soil, decide on the type and extent of foundation work and the suitability of particular building materials to produce the house desired. As for the client's own personal taste, characteristics and requirements, *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī asserted that:

when it comes to the client's desires and needs, I know exactly what's in his head, what he likes or dislikes, what his brothers would prefer, and even what his sons-in-law might like to have in their rooms. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī*, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

If the preliminary plan, along with the other details, like the number of *rawāshīn* (bay-windows) and *ḥaramdīnāt* (balconies), were agreed upon by the client and his family, the *mu'allem* would then discuss with the client the available budget and period of time required to produce a house to the relevant specifications. Once

agreed, it only remained to settle upon the system of payment. A number of witnesses or someone from the building guild would be present at both stages. It should be noted, however, that these formalities would be relaxed if the client was a relative or a neighbour of the *mu'alletm*.

### 6.1.3. *Al-Qabūl* (Acceptance, agreement)

The agreement on the system of payment was the conclusion of the preliminaries to the building work. There were two systems of payment: *jiwādah* or *mudjāwadah* (lump-sum contract), or *odjrah yaūmiyyah* (daily instalments). Prominent *mu'alletmīn* would not accept the second mode of payment, because, besides being less profitable, it had a degrading connotation. Only modest *mu'alletmīn* would accept this. Once the system of payment was established, the budget of the client would be discussed. The budget was not necessarily any indication of the client's income, though this was fairly well-judged by the *mu'alletm*:

...from his name I can tell you how much he carries in his pocket..in our community, the face of God is not covered [people new everything about each other] I could tell if the fabric was in excess so I will give him a roomy drape, and if the material was meagre, I will give him a just-fitting and covering wrap. In general, an average four story house would require something from 1000 to 2000 guinea. The client can do better, of course, if he want to have a very nice house. (*Mu'alletm* Ahmad Ḥamzah al-Rīfī, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990).

The price of building material during this period varied slightly from one *mu'alletm*'s account to the other. *Mu'alletm* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin put the price of 1000 *ḥadjar manqabī* (stone excavated from the Manqabah lagoon in Jeddah) at 360 riyals, which seems like a very late figure (1940s) when compared with estimates from other sources. Al-Anṣārī, puts the prices of *ḥadjar* (sold in 100s) in 1926 AD/1359 AH at 80-100 riyal. According to the accounts of the Nawab Sikandar<sup>9</sup>, the prices of building material in Makkah in 1864 AD/1284 AH were as follow:

---

<sup>9</sup> Sikandar, The Begum of Bhopal: The Nawab. A Pilgrimage to Mecca. Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co., 1906. 29-31.

- \* Lime = 12 measures, or one chest = four qūrūsh<sup>10</sup> (*n.sing.* qarsh) = 0.2 riyal (£ 0.028 in today's value);
- \* Bricks = 1st quality, per 1000 = two riyals and 10 qūrūsh (£ 0.35);  
2nd quality, per 1000 = one riyal and five qūrūsh (£ 0.17);  
3rd quality, per 1000 = one riyal (£ 0.14);
- \* Stones = 1st quality, per 1000 = four riyals (£ 0.57);  
2nd quality, per 1000 = two riyals (£ 0.28);
- \* Timber for beams, from seven to ten riyals each lot of ten beams (£ 1 - 1.42);  
for rafters = from five to six qūrūsh each lot of ten beams (£ 0.03 - 0.042);

What was gathered during the interviews with different builders and clients suggests that the cost of constructing a medium size house (accommodation for three families) reached 400 Golden English Pounds  $\approx$  4000 *riyal madjīdī*  $\approx$  £ 15.400 today's value, while the total cost of building a large multi-family house (six families) reached an amount of 1500 Golden English Pounds  $\approx$  15000 *riyal madjīdī*  $\approx$  £ 57.750 today's value<sup>11</sup>. However, in Makkah and in some parts of Al-Madinah, the excavation of stone - as the main building material - was a very costly undertaking which resulted in much more expensive - yet more durable - houses.

As in the contemporary sense, the 'budget' meant how much the client could raise for his project, which depended on the client's relations with his family, clan, friends and connections<sup>12</sup>. If the client were known to have come from a large family, or to be popular in his neighbourhood, the budget could be roughly estimated by the *mu'allem*, until the client puts it in specific terms. The specified amount would include the *mu'allem*'s share. Note that the seniority of the *mu'allem* not only determined the size of his projects, the type of his clients, and his allowance in the project as we see in chapter five, but also allowed him a relatively free-hand approach to experiment with new forms and ideas within a restricted range of possibilities

---

<sup>10</sup> A monetary unit used during the Turks and still used today (one riyal = 20 qarsh). However, the values presented here were those of the 1860s AD/1280s AH.

<sup>11</sup> Similar figures were cited in Al-Maghrabī, M. 'Alī. *Malāmiḥ al Ḥayāh al Edjīma 'iyyah Fī Al Hedjāz*. [(Arabic) Aspects of the Hedjāzī Social Life]. Jeddah: Tehamah, 1982. *Passim*.

<sup>12</sup> For example, if the client was a newly-wed, he would receive *rufūd* (material gifts = jewellery, money, food, furniture...etc.) from his family, friends, relatives and community members to assist him in establishing the marital house.

determined by a culturally-accepted matrix, which is discussed in chapter nine. It also reflected a trust in his ability and confidence in his experience and sympathetic appreciation of the desires of the client. Although towards the 1960s people believed that employing senior *mu'allemin* would reduce their control over their decisions.

#### 6.1.4. *Raṣq al-sīsān/Hafr al-asāsāt* (Foundation layout)

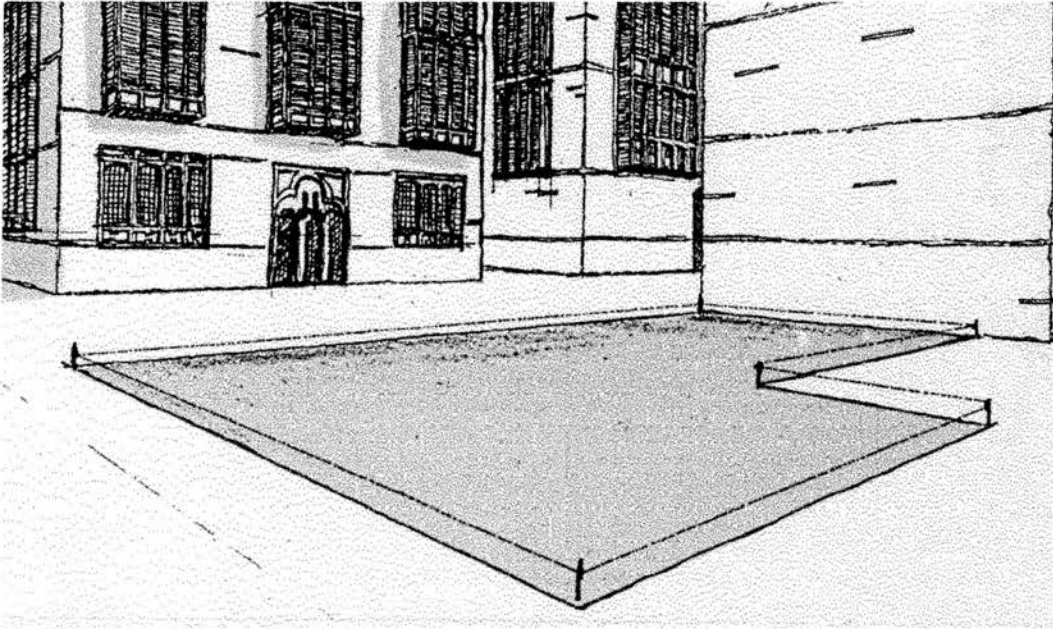


Fig. 6.7. The accurate line of the development was ascertained by taut strings.

On the first day of the project, after the *fajr* (dawn) prayer, the *mu'allemin* would depart with his building-team from the mosque to the building site. After boring the earth, he would roughly delineate the outside confines of the structure by indicating in the ground with his stick where these should be by careful positioning of *qit'ah naḍīfah* (clear-cut stone) in each corner of the land and the use of taut *awtār* (strings) the accurate lines of the development would be ascertained. The *nawwār* (plasterer) would then pour *nūrah* (lime powder) over these strings to make the outline visible (Fig. 6.7.). Each corner-stone was known as *rāss al-dumāgh* (top of the head), or *roukon* (corner).

The soil in Jeddah is of several types. In places it is a layer of *ḥadjar baḥarī* (limestone), or of *sabakhah* (saline sand) or of *baṭḥā'* (sand) and small rocks. But elsewhere it is only soft *kāshūr* (small coral rocks)....

*Itqān al-bedāiyyah niṣf al-‘amal* [well begun is half done], but some *mu‘allemīn*, may God guide them, they do not dig deep enough to remove this soft material and start building immediately, thinking that the land could bear their loads, and to save themselves some money. But they end up paying more money and losing reputation by having to *y‘addelo* [level] their houses. To me this land is like my skin, I can feel it, I can smell it, I can detect its illness and I can prepare the right medication for it before it hurts. (*Mu‘allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 6, 1990).

The laying of the foundations began with excavating to a depth of up to two meters according to the nature and quality of the soil and projected height of the building (Fig.6.8.). This operation was known as *raṣḍ al-sīsān* (foundation balancing). When the digging was completed, the *mu‘allem* and his crew would pour in *dibs* (thick mud from the sea-bed) and *kāshūr* (a type of coral-blocks) to form a thin layer which would function as a damp course (against the high water-table of Jeddah. This procedure was not followed in Makkah). This mud was brought from *Baḥer al-Ṭīn* (the mud-sea which is a lagoon to the northwest of the old town) on donkey-drawn carts. It was then flattened, sprinkled with water, *nūrah* (if it were very thick), and *baḥḥā’* (sand). The *ṭiyyān* or *khalāṭ* would tread it until the mud turned into a paste-like material. It would then be loaded in *masaḥāt* (n.sing. *maṣḥah* = metal containers) to be used as mortar.

The best mortar was *al-ṭinah al-soudah* [black-mud] that we brought from the bottom of *al-Manqabah* lagoon. It was thick and could hold two large blocks of hard stones of *ḥadjar baḥarī* together like cement today. The last building I restored was that of *bait al-afandī Naṣīf* [the house of the prominent *Naṣīf* family] in which the original builder - *Mu‘allem Dandarouh* from Makkah - used *ḥashwah* [filling] of crushed-date stones, mixed with black-mud to achieve a thick and solid *mūnah* [mortar], it was also called *dibs*. (*Mu‘allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

In Al-Madinah, the best type of mortar was *ṭīn al-sabakh* (flood/saline-mud) which, because of its density, and its bonding strength (when mixed with sand brought specially from a mountain there known as *Jabal Sil’*) did not need any further treatment. It would be collected from the flooded fields, mixed with the special sand and left on the building site for two days for *takhmīr* (fermentation) before it was used. There were also other types of mud, like *dohaiyyinah* (greasy-mud) which was



collected from plantation fields. This type of mud was not used for buildings more than two stories in height because of its weaker binding properties<sup>13</sup>.

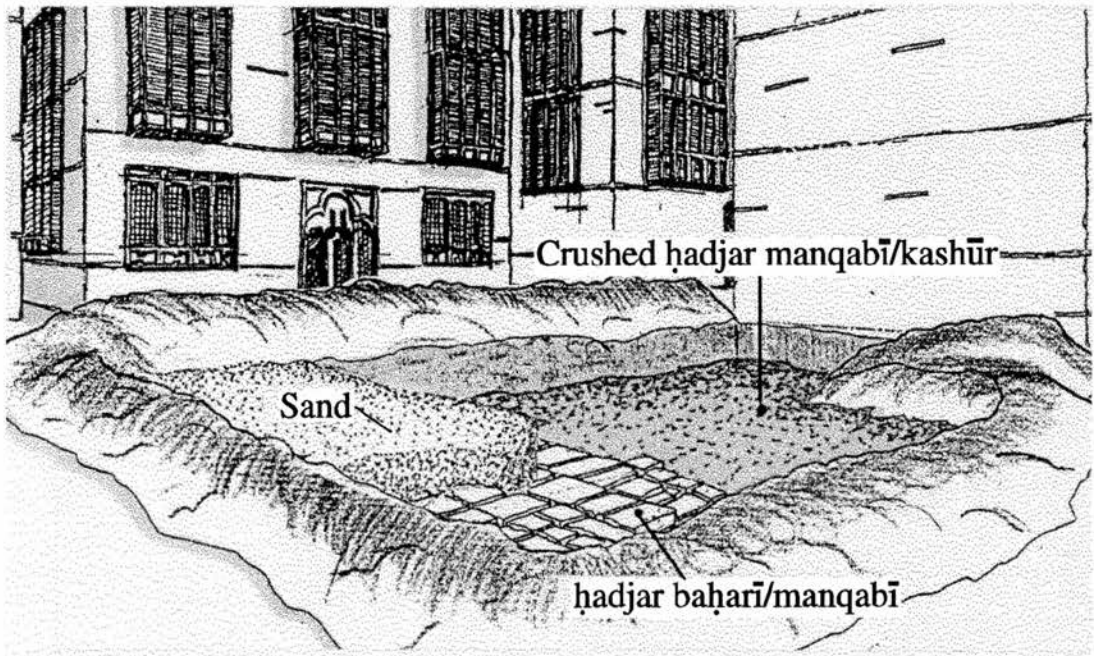


Fig. 6.8. Foundation layout.

After this layer was put down, large *ḥadjar baḥarī* (1 m x 1.5 m) would be arranged on top to form a *ḥaṣīrah* (raft-foundation). This stone was much stronger, and it could bear a heavier load than *ḥadjar manqabī* (20 cm x 40 cm coralline limestone) which is why it was mostly used for foundations. Once excavated from the sea-bed, this stone (*ḥadjar baḥarī*) was cut into three or four smaller stones for easier handling but only an expert and physically-strong *garārī* (stone-cutter) could work with this type of rock because of its hardness and the coarseness of its surface<sup>14</sup>. Although the houses of *Ḥārat al-Baḥar*<sup>15</sup> in Jeddah were typified by the use of *ḥadjar baḥarī* both above and below ground, *ḥadjar manqabī* was common throughout the rest of the town.

<sup>13</sup> *Mu'allem Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rifī*. Tape-recorded interview, Al-Madinah, April 27, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> A *garārī* who works with *ḥadjar baḥarī* had to treat his hands with salt and *ḥinna'* blossoms at the end of the day. Sometimes he was obliged to stop working for two days until his hands were healed. Very few *garārīyyah* (n.sing. *garārī*) could cut this kind of rocks into perfect squared-blocks.

<sup>15</sup> *Ḥārat al-Baḥar* was the fishing community. On days when there was no activity in the fish market, they excavated *ḥadjar baḥarī*, loaded them aboard their *sanābīk*, *sawā'ī* or *doqqol* (boat types), and either sold them or used them to build their own houses. The majority of the surviving traditional houses of Jeddah are from this *ḥāra*.



In Makkah and Al-Madinah, there was rarely a need to put down foundations because of the rocky nature of the ground. Their builders worked on *sisan ṭabi 'iyyah* (natural or direct foundations). However, in a few areas of Al-Madinah, foundation work was carried out in a fashion similar to elsewhere, except that the ground was pounded and then built up - *to 'abad* (graded) - with *dabsh* (rubble) to street level. Unlike most of the houses in Jeddah, ground floors in Makkah and Al-Madinah were built of mountain stone which gave the buildings a much greater load-bearing capacity than those built entirely out of soft limestone. *Ḥadjar baladī* or *asmar* (black or mountain-stone), *ḥadjar zarāyqī* (smooth volcanic-stone or basalt), *ṭūb aḥmar* (red-brick), or *ḥadjar simaismī* (porous sedimentary limestone) were used in Al-Madinah for foundations and building purposes when necessary, all of which needed special *garārīyyah* to handle them.

It took a week to ten days to complete the foundations (working from just after the dawn prayer, before sunrise until half an hour before sunset) depending on the size of the project and the type of soil. Throughout this period, the client would be on hand to judge progress, offer his views or just to be seen to be *ḥaḍīr* (present). If it were *'ittifāq odjrah* (a daily-payment contract) the client would be present on the site at sunset to make any comments and to pay the worker. If he approved of what had been accomplished thus far, he would give the *mu'allem* the 'go-ahead' for the next stage, the ground floor construction. If not, he would negotiate with the *mu'allem* over possible modifications or improvements in the quality of work or possibly dismiss the *mu'allem* altogether. (At this point, of course, he was also able to begin to visualize the form of his house from the plan of the stonework laid down by then).

#### 6.1.5. *Raṣṣ al-ḥadjar* (Brickwork, brick-laying)

This stage began when ground mark had come up to street level. The *mu'allem* would mark out the entire plan of the ground floor with some *taghiyyrāt khaffāfī* (slight modifications) to the full-size plan seen by the client on the first meeting. He would then be followed by the *nawwār bisaṭle nūrah* (the worker who put down the marking-lines using a bucket of lime-powder) with the client present. The correct lines and positions of the walls and corners were again determined by placing a perfectly squared-cut stone in each corner at established right angles between

which connecting rows of stones were laid, the result was a clear 'footprint' of the house on the ground (Fig. 6.9.). The next thing that was built was *faḥīl al-daradj* (the staircase-shaft, carriage of stairs). This consisted of a rectangular formation of vertical stone-walls to ground level, creating a 'core of support' within the structure which rose with the height of each floor, allowing for access to the staircase and into which the external and other load-bearing walls were tied by means of *ayādī* (hands: wooden-beams) for support during construction and for reinforcement thereafter. The vacant space in the shaft was filled with mud and stones as it was erected or was left vacant as storage spaces<sup>16</sup>.

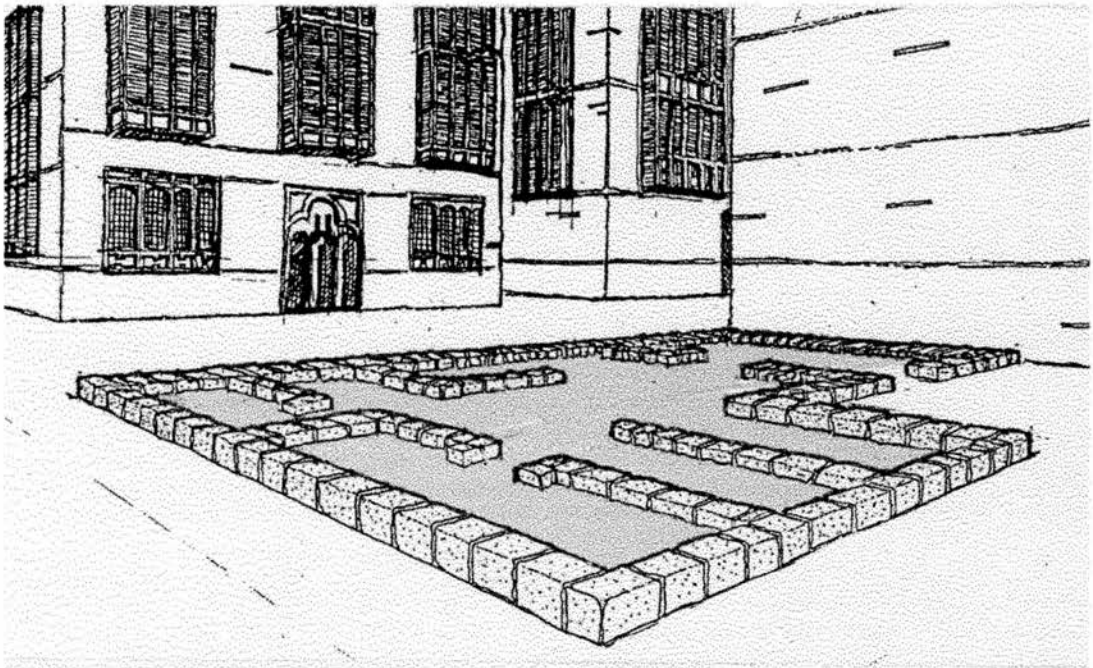


Fig. 6.9. The result was a clear 'footprint' of the house on the ground.

The ditch of the foundation would be filled with one to two courses of stone-blocks depending on the uniformity the street/ground level. This would bring the building's ground level to about 40 cm above street level. The walls would then be built up in rows of stones following the ground floor pattern or the 'footprint' of the building (Fig. 6.10.) up to the level of the sills of *rawāshīn* (about 1.4 m). A total of at least 1.3 meter above street level would then be filled with sand and crushed-stone

<sup>16</sup> This technique - besides having a structural significance - was used by *mu'allemīn* in the early days before they began to exploit the fact that by concealing the location of the staircase, the client could not risk dismissing them before the completion of the house.

to mark the building's ground level<sup>17</sup>. *Nuqul* or (small stones) were used to fill the small gaps caused by the irregularity of large stones. The positioning of individual stones depended on their particular shape resulting from the way they were cut by the *garārī*. The *mu'allem* might, for example, instruct his worker to lay a stone on its *wadjh gharbī* (western-side) in order to match the stone next to it without any irregularities. An expert *garārī*, however, did not need the *mu'allem* to assist him in laying stones on their appropriate sides.

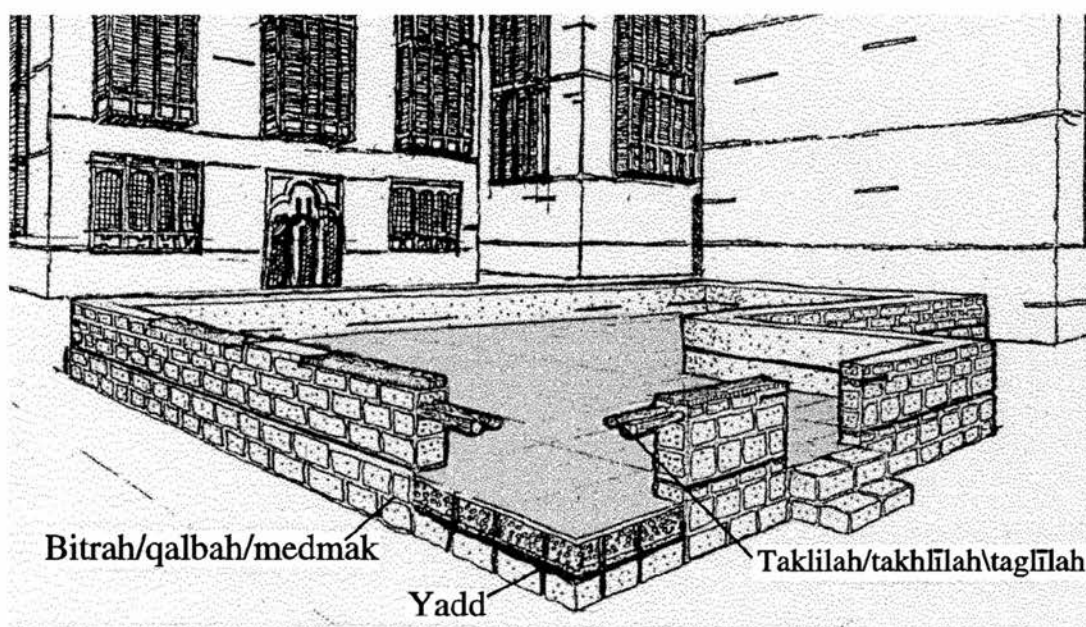


Fig. 6.10. Walls would be built up in rows of stones following the 'footprint' of the building.

"*Al mu'allem al fannān yibān men jadrowatū*" (the artistic merit of the builder is displayed in his walls). The expertise of a *mu'allem* was judged by his ability to build his walls up to a height of 30 meters without any deviation from vertical and line, and the *mu'allem* had constantly to check and measure for the slightest variation in his walls and corners as the height of the building increased.

*Tarbī' al-maḥīl* [squaring the room] was a basic procedure that a young *mu'allem* could achieve, but keeping it *murabba'* [square] for five floors was not something everybody could do. It was a black day for a *mu'allem* who discovered a *maiyyah* [deviation] in his walls or angles...oh, his shame could not be described...better he blamed it on the land. (*Mu'allem al-Rifī*, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> Almost all houses encountered were built at least one meter above ground level. This was mainly to raise the ground floor of the house above eye level to ensure maximum privacy.

After every six *madāmīk* (n.sing. *medmāk* = course of stones = about 20 cm) known also as *bitrah* or *qalbah*, boards or poles of Indian teak known as *taklīlah*, *taglīlah* or *takhlīlah*<sup>18</sup> (insertions or weight-distributors) would be laid or inserted horizontally along the tops of the outside walls and nailed to them. (Fig. 6.11.) They would then be topped with mortar (mud, *nūrah*, and sand-paste) mixed with crushed *manqabī* or *kāshūr* stones as a bed for the next course of stones. Sometimes these *taklīlat* would be inserted in other walls at points of likely settlement or where greater stress occurred as from staircases or storage rooms. In this case, the purpose of these horizontally-laid wooden poles was to maintain the width and uniformity of the walls. *Tahzīm al-bait* (lit. Tying the house with a waistband) or with these wooden boards gave it greater strength and stability against *qarṣ* or *tariyyīḥ* (settlement). The techniques of using alternate rows of stones or bricks and wooden beams to build *jadruwah* or *ḥawāiyyt* (n.sing. *ḥaiyyṭah/ḥā'it* = wall) was known in the 16th and 17th centuries as *buniyyān shāmī* (the construction technique of the Levant) after the construction method used by Syrian craftsmen.



Fig. 6.11. Boards of Indian teak would be laid horizontally along the tops of the outside walls.

Before the 1860s, these *taklīlat* were simple tree-trunks which were laid on the stone-courses. After a few years, they were developed in such a way that builders got more wood out of one trunk once they cut it into a number of boards. This technique was used in Makkah, Jeddah and Al-Madinah, but instead of laying the wooden boards *baṭīḥ* (flat), they were cut into narrow boards, which were then laid on their '*aṣṭ* [board-on-edge] to get yet more strength out of one thin board:

<sup>18</sup> *Taklīlah* in Arabic refers to a band or a crown, while *taglīlah* means 'weight-reducer/distributor.' *Takhlīlah* means 'to insert, loosen, pass through, permeate or to intervene.' It was noted that the three terms were used interchangeably by *mu'allemin* throughout Ḥedjāz. In Al-Madinah, however, the equivalent of *taglīlah* is known as *dafīn* meaning 'the concealed, submerged or buried.'



...bear the loads against the wooden vines otherwise it will *yītoqq* (break). (*Mu'allemin* al-Rīfī, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990).

These wooden boards would not survive the attacks of *'ottah* (termites), but the *mu'allemin* discovered a way to treat wood with *mughrī* (a type of glue used in boat-building) until various kinds of paint were introduced to the country. Wood was then coated in advance and used in the building, although this treatment did not prevent the swelling of wood in Jeddah because of the high humidity in the air, or the shrinkage of wood in Makkah because of the excessive heat and dryness of the air. However successful weather-enduring and termite-resistant, wooden beams and pillars, it was found, could be made from palm-trunks brought from Wādī Fāṭimah near Makkah or imported *sādj* (teak). They required minimum treatment and survived the weather very well, although the natural decay of wood was unavoidable.

In Al-Madinah, the ground floor could be built out of *lebin* (mud) poured into wooden-casts, and supported with the same type of wooden poles as in Jeddah and Makkah. It could also be built out of *bolokkāt ṭīn* (mud-bricks). These were made in advance by putting *ṭīn ḥilow* (pure-mud) in a standard mold, left to dry in the sun for three or four days, and then used in the same way as red-bricks. The role of the sun in drying and baking the mud or red-bricks was eventually substituted with ovens known as *kuoshah*. This was done in the case of one or two-story houses<sup>19</sup>. In the case of higher buildings or for retaining and load-bearing walls, mud-bricks were totally avoided (substituted with granite or lava-stone). In Makkah and Al-Madinah, the stone excavation for building was a costly procedure, as we see earlier, but because of strong properties of the stone, it produced more durable houses (besides being rescuable in the case of demolition). In Makkah, *ḥadjar al-Shemaisī* (stones brought from al-Shemaisī mountain outside Makkah) was known to be durable and hard to excavate, hence very expensive to build with. In Al-Madinah, *ḥadjar sil'* (stones excavated from the mountain of Sil') had a similar status as that of *al-shemaisī* stone.

---

<sup>19</sup> Richard Burton - in his description of Al-Madinah in 1844 - stated that the "city was built on a gently sloping plateau of white chalk, salt sand, and loamy clay that was easily made into bricks...the houses built of palm-wood and burned bricks, flat roofed and double storied... the town was surrounded with a wall of granite and lava blocks cemented with lime." Burton, Richard. Pilgrimage to El-Medina and Mecca. 3 vols. London: Longman, 1855. 178.

During the construction of the ground floor, preparations for the anticipated sizes of *rawāshīn*<sup>20</sup>, built-in closets and interior wall-recesses (for shelving) were made. Such preparations might include, for example, incorporating into the walls the right size and thickness of *taklīlāt* to be projected at the base of the *rowshān* openings which would be then called *lisān al-tāqah* (lit. tongue = window-support). *Shīshān* and *rawāshīn* were not independently fixed to the building after its construction, for their wall-supports were arranged in advance during construction. The *mu'allem*, after deciding on the size of *rawāshīn*, recommended to the client the most suitable carpenter to handle the type and the size of these bay-windows. On the other hand, the budget of the client determined the type of wood, the type of *mashrābiyyāt*<sup>21</sup>, the quality of ornamentation and the overall size of the wooden lattice-work to cover such apertures.

Usually, and in spite of the availability of *ṭurfah* (eight meters long wooden beams)<sup>22</sup>, rooms were not larger than 5 m x 5 m for fear of the bending or *tarkhīm* of flooring support joists. Because wall thickness (about one meter) would consume a portion of this length<sup>23</sup>, and the remaining portion (about six meters) of the wooden- beams or joists could not withstand expected *ḥaniyyāt* (bending-moments). *Mu'allemīn* found by experience that "*aqṣā 'istīqāmah le- 'ūd al-tasqīf*"<sup>24</sup> (the maximum resistance of bending-moments for wooden-beams) was achieved at about five meters. This length would assure the owner of the house level-floors and ceilings for as long as his house lasted. They also discovered a technique of using ready-bent trunks (naturally-bent tree-trunks) with the arched side upwards in order to gain more bending resistance.

---

<sup>20</sup> The differences between a *rowshān* and a window or *shīsh* (blinds/shutters) are many, the most important of which is that the *rowshān* would be built at the building's ground level (one meter above street level, at the level of the main door lintel) while the *shīsh* would be built halfway up the *rowshān* (about 1.8 meters from street level). Structurally, the *shīsh* is flushed with the elevation with a wooden-screen in front, while the *rowshān* is a three-sided projecting bay-window with a sitting-platform inside.

<sup>21</sup> There were either elaborate and reinforced Egyptian *mashrābiyyāt*, or simple and relatively small Turkish *rawāshīn* known as *agfāṣ* (n.sing *gafaṣ* = cage).

<sup>22</sup> These wooden beams were about 15 - 20 cm in diameter, on top of which was a dead load of about 10 - 40 cm thick flooring materials.

<sup>23</sup> Walls were as thick as 85 - 100 cm at the base, and 55 - 65 cm at the top of the house, through which the wooden-beams had to travel to the external walls of the house.

<sup>24</sup> *Mu'allem* Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rifī, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990.



The duration of this phase depended on the 'quality' and ability of the *mu'allem* in managing his team, and on the capacity of the *garārī* to cut the required stones at a certain rate. In Jeddah, for example, *mu'allem* Abū-Zaid was "very demanding and tough on his workmen, and was famous for being the fastest *mu'allem* to deliver his houses."<sup>25</sup> Normally, for an average-sized house, the *garārīyyah* could finish up to two courses of stone per day. In Al-Madinah and Makkah, because of the relatively heavy weight and the nature of mountain-stone, the best *garārī* could cut only two stones a day if "the stone was rough and *junub* [hard and large] and the cut required was clean [sharp]." But if "the stone was *rūaisāt* [small] and the knocking [cut] required was *shāqūf* or *ta'dīl wadjh* [rough/basic], he could then cut up to 60 stones a day."<sup>26</sup> On average they could accomplish more than two cubic meters of stone-built structure per day. An average eight *makhāzen* house (8 x 42 m<sup>2</sup> = 336 m<sup>2</sup>) was completed in two to four months.

Arches, doors and bay-windows required special kinds of scaffolding, building materials and craftsmen. '*Oqūd* (arches) were framed with '*idān karfah* (thin and flexible wooden-beams) which came from Sudan and India. The standard dimensions of these beams were 10 cm thick x 10 m length.

...*nisaiyydj al-'aqd* [make the frame of the arch], *no'qod famm al-'aqd* [tie the mouth = horsing-up and decide the shape of the arch-top], then we remove the frame after two weeks. (*Mu'allem* al-Rīfī, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990).

The framework of the arch was made during construction (but was later standardized by some *mu'allemīn*) and installed in the desired place. It was then clad with a *ṭabaq* or *qālib* (mold, cast) of stone and mortar known as *ḥalq al-bāb* (lit. throat of the door), supported by *dabsh* (heavy-stones) to maintain its shape until it hardened. The same procedure was followed for window-cases and door *nidjāf* (frames or standards). Staircases which were supported by arches were known as *daradj ma'qūd* (arched-staircases).

There were several types of door, window and entrance-surrounds and standards which were common in most of the Ḥedjāzī cities, for example:

<sup>25</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> *Mu'allem* Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rīfī, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990.

- *Ghums/Makhmūs* (lancet, Tudor & basket-handle arches for staircases),
- *Naṣīf* (round and horseshoe),
- *Maiyytūr* (segmented),
- *Mughrabī* (Moroccan trefoil arch).

Free-standing arches were supported on *kitf al-ḥadjar* (shoulders and columns of stone) or wooden columns known as *burdj al-seqālah* (tower of scaffolding). These could be as high as three stories if the right thickness of tree-trunks was available but, if supported on stone columns, had to have a very wide base which reduced the size (width) of the entrance. The specially-cut stones, known as *ḥadjar al-‘aqd* (stone of the arch: voussoir), were either *ḥadjar baladī* or *tūb aḥmar*.

The ground floor construction would conclude when it reaches the height of *‘awāriḍ al-rawāshīn* (lintels of the bay-window) which is about 3.6 meters from street level. The lintels would then be topped with round Javanese wood-beams and inserted into the side-walls to the depth of about 20 cm. Three courses of stones would then follow, taking the ground floor to the height of 4.2 to 4.6 meters from street level. The thickness of the ground floor ceiling would range from 30 to 50 cm.

#### 6.1.6. *Raf’ al-binā’/Baqiyyat al-adwār* (Typical floor construction)

The first floor was likely to follow the same layout as the ground floor, almost like a vertical extension of the walls - unless the building consisted of only two floors with a terrace or *khārdjah*<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 6.12.). Usually, it would start at the height of 4 m to 4.5 m from street level. The thickness of the walls would decrease as the building went up. For example, if the wall thickness of the ground floor was one meter, the wall thickness of the first floor would be reduced to 85 cm, and so on with an average reduction of wall thickness of about 17 cm per floor. Building the stone casement of the staircase was the major event at the beginning of this phase. The design and direction of flights and landings were partly the decision of the *mu’allem* and partly that of the client. In most cases, the staircase would be located at the far southern end of the house or slightly centred. This helped the builder to use the staircase-shaft as a ventilation and light-well for the adjacent rooms.

<sup>27</sup> *Khārdjah* in Al-Madinah is known as *saqīfah* (lit. little roof).

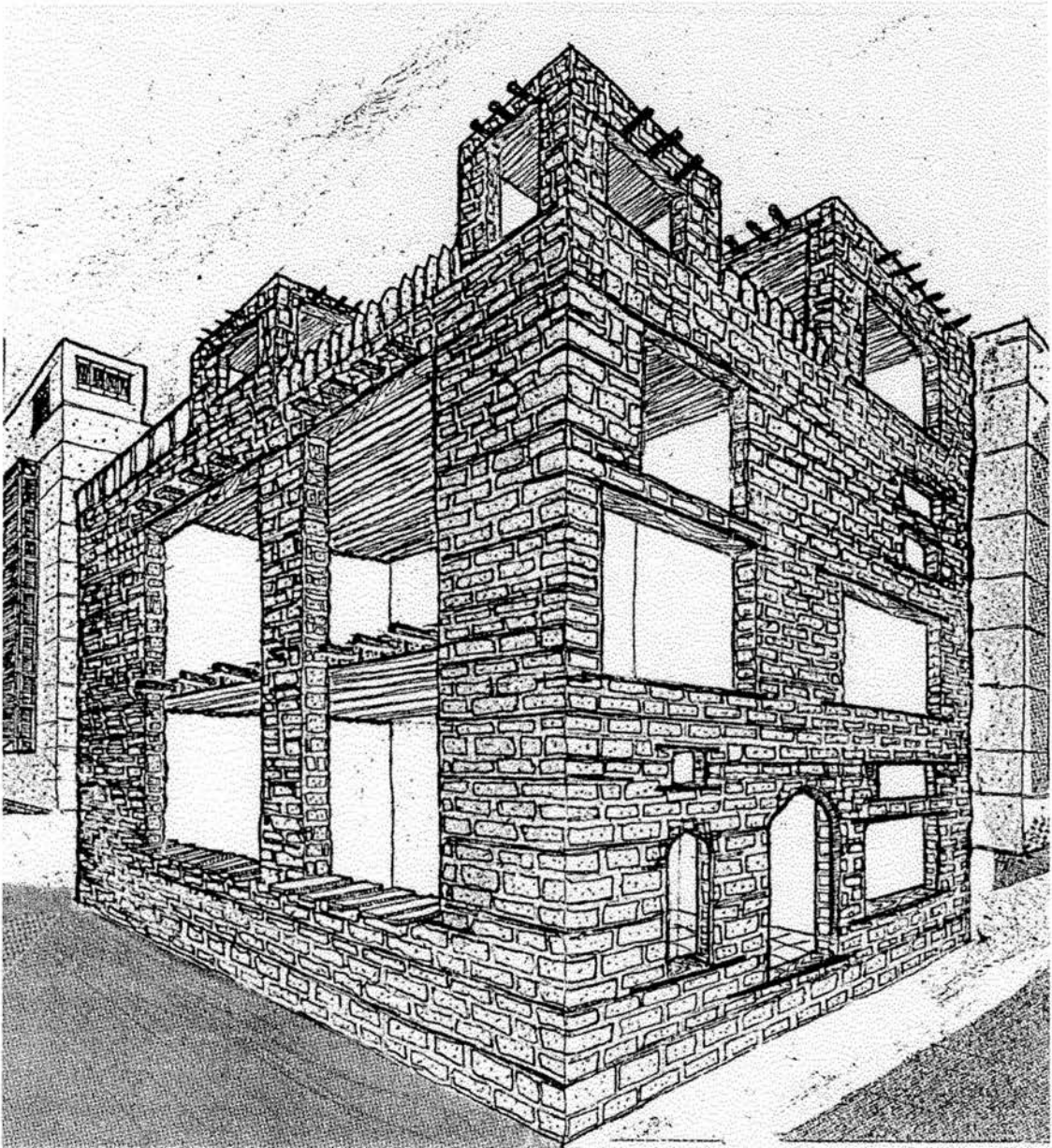


Fig. 6.12. Floors construction near completion.

The stairs themselves were made out of round *gandal* wooden-beams, placed side by side in a raft formation and inserted into the stone casement of the staircase-shaft. They would then be topped with a layer of *mūnah* (mortar), and - in merchant houses - marble blocks or hand-dressed stones would be placed on each step. An arch would be *yo'qad* (placed at the entrance of the staircase-shaft) in the same fashion described above. The height of each *sinnah* (riser) was about four *banānāt* (fingers)

or three to four *hinch* (inches)<sup>28</sup>, while treads width varied from 25- 30 cm to 25 cm. In some larger houses, 18 cm risers and 35 cm treads were encountered. In general, These rose in very shallow flights - almost ramp like - of an average of nine steps per flight in the case of a square staircase-shaft and a combination of nine to five in cases of rectangular ones<sup>29</sup>. The number of steps per floor ranged from 18 to 24 steps. There were several types of staircases the most uncommon of which was the external free-standing stairs or *daradj shāmī* (Syrian-style). The construction of staircases was a field of demonstration for each *mu'alle*m's technical and artistic talent.

The showpiece staircase in traditional Jeddah was that built by *mu'alle*m Dandarouh from Makkah, for *al-afandī Naṣīf*. The risers of this staircase were very low (less than four centimeters) and their treads more than 50 cm. *Mu'alle*m Dandarouh designed and built this staircase almost like a ramp so that the owner of the house and his guests could climb all the way up to a special reception roof-terrace without getting off the back of their horses. He also designed and built another *daradj serrī* (secret staircase) for the family and servants in such a way that the stair-flights were not exposed to any of the rooms of the house. This staircase allowed female guests and *saqqāyīn* (water-carriers) to move about freely without disturbing the activities of the house or affecting the privacy of adjoining rooms. It was naturally-lit through horizontal louvres located half way up each floor, while at night, it utilized special alcoves on the wall for the placement of oil lamps. This design was the source of utmost pride for both the owner and the *mu'alle*m for many years to come.

The positioning of air-shafts and side-openings for ventilation was also decided upon at this stage. The pattern of air circulation, the size of the openings and their structural consequences were major questions facing the *mu'alle*m and testing his competence. This was also a major field of continuous innovation. In Al-Madinah, the *bait al-bīr* (well-shaft), and *al-jilā*, *bādāhandj* or *bāzāhandj* (grilled ventilation-opening or wind-catch)<sup>30</sup> were given a special emphasis in layout and construction. The first was located between the *merḥāq* or *bait al-mā' / ṭahārah* (bathroom,

---

<sup>28</sup> As a reminder: three inches = 7.62 cm.

<sup>29</sup> The nine steps being towards the wide side, and the three being across the narrow edge of the rectangle.

<sup>30</sup> See figures (6.5.) and (6.6.).



water-closet or toilet) and the *maṭbakh* or *murakkab* (kitchen), and since the *saqqā* was in and out of it continually to draw water, the privacy of the adjoining rooms was very important. In the second, its shape and the direction of its openings and movable flaps governed the pattern of air circulation throughout the house as well as its sand-filtering properties.

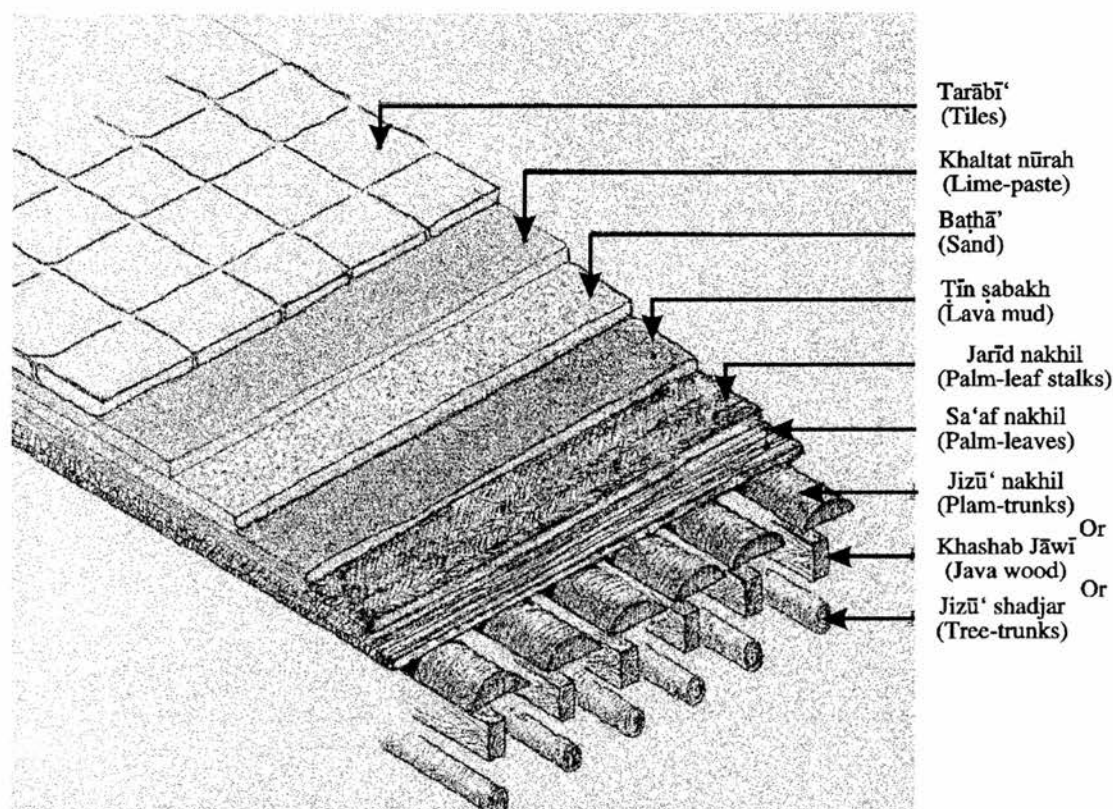


Fig. 6.13. Ceiling/flooring detail.

The skills of the *nadjār* (carpenter) were of particular importance at this stage for the construction of floors, ceilings, balconies, and stairs. The flooring on the ground level consisted of thick wooden-supports of *khashab Jāwī* or *funnī* (Java wood) which came from Singapore in a standard thickness of 7.62 cm, on top of which was, first, a layer of *sa'af* (palm-fronds), then a layer of *jarīd* (palm-leaf stalks) or *khashab ḥūr* (type of wood), then a layer of *tīn sabakh* (saline mud-paste) mixed with crushed coral-stone and lime, a layer of *baṭḥā'* (sand), a layer of *nūrah* (lime), and finally a layer of *tarābī'* (square-cut stone-tiles). This process was known as *tasbīl balāṭ*, *tasbīl biyyāḍ* or *tadjṣīṣ* (covering with tiles and mortar). The floors and ceilings of larger houses of Makkah substituted *tīn al-sabakh* with *tubṭāb* which is a cementing agent made of a mixture of crushed stones, limestone and lime-powder (Fig. 6.13).

The quality and techniques of *tasqīf* or ceiling construction was determined by the budget of the client and the availability of building material. For example, the process of *tasqīf ghashīm* or *‘āiyydī* (simple, ordinary) - which means the installation of untreated (unpainted) and undecorated wooden-beams at intervals of 25 cm to 50 cm - depending on the intended height (this type was the cheapest of all). The second type of ceiling is *tasqīf wasaṭ/basṭ* (moderate, flat) in which the wooden-beams are refined and given an extra layer of wood treatment and paint. The third and most expensive is *tasqīf makhṣūṣ* (distinctive, special) in which more expensive types of wood are used and further treated with decoration and colours. In all these techniques, the wooden-beams are left exposed to form what is commonly known as *ḡulū‘* (ribs). The thickness of flooring generally ranged from 11 cm to 45 cm.

It was not common to line the ceiling except in large houses for rich merchants, although in Al-Madinah, *sa‘af* was arranged in a diamond pattern for decoration since it could be seen between the supporting poles. This roofing system was called *tasqīf shaṭarandj* (checkerboard ceiling). Towards the 1900s, a very elaborate types of roofing known as *tasqīf shāmī* (Syrian style) were used in large and rich houses. It depended on complete decoration of pre-cut and pre-decorated wooden-beams to be installed along with other decorated wooden elements to form a sort of a false ceiling. In the case of a *tasqīf* for a bathroom, provision for a *manwar* (light-well, window) was made. This is a square or a circular opening/s for ventilation and discharge of steam and odour, while allowing natural light inside the room. Later, towards the 1930s AD/1340s AH, these were covered with glass sheets or a number of small domical forms.

*Ḥaramdīnāt* (balconies), if featured, could start from any floor. Round-cut *ḥadjar baḥarī* or *manqabī* were prepared in advance, and then placed on top of each other to form supporting columns for balconies. In some cases, tree-trunks were used as columns but the required lengths and diameters were very rare and expensive. The durability of these wooden-columns was limited due to intense heat and the humidity, and because of the high salt-content of the air in areas like Jeddah and Yanbu which tends to accelerate the process of wood deterioration. Buildings with large wooden-columns had to be treated regularly with oil, which was a difficult and costly operation.



The completion of *qaṣabāt* (*n.sing. qaṣabah* = masonry water-pipe) or *shaib* (cloth water-pipe) for the collection of rainwater from the roof was undertaken at this stage. This smoothly-plastered water-pipe lead to the *ṣehrīdj* (water-tank) located at the basement of the house (foundation level). This same technique is also used for the discharge of toilet and kitchen wastes. These would collect in a *baiyyārah* or *dabil* (septic-tank) at the basement level. Septic-tanks were emptied and cleaned by *nazzāḥīn* (*n.sing. nazzāḥ* = nightman, bailer, sewage-cleaner) once every two or three years, depending on the size of the tank (and number of families in the house).

#### 6.1.7. *Al-liyāsah/al-Biyād/āl-Tangīl* (Plastering, painting)

Plastering could be undertaken either internally as construction progressed or both internally and externally when the building was completed or near completion. Normally, this was recognized as being when the *mu'allem* had completed the *khārdjah* (roof-top terrace). Plastering would be undertaken vertically from top to bottom in stripes determined by the length of the plastering-scaffolding known as *raḥmāniyyah* (Fig. 6.14.). These were not longer than four meters in average and would be suspended from the top of the building by extended pulleys which were set up at the top of the house. Strong and long English maritime ropes were lowered from these to the *raḥmāniyyah* and tied to it. The pulleys were then controlled by two plasterer-assistants on top of the building who would lower or raise the plasterer to the desired level. It was the norm that this *raḥmāniyyah* be assembled and installed in its place at night so that work can commence in early morning. Openings of *rawāshīn*, doors and windows would be covered with large plywood-sheets until the plastering process was totally completed.

Buildings of *ḥadjar manqabī* needed *tanwīr* (plastering) unlike those of *ḥadjar baḥarī* which did not require plastering because of their weathering properties and resistance to erosion. In Al-Madinah and Makkah, buildings with *ḥadjar baladī* (mountain-stone) and *ḥadjar ḥarāwī* (lava-stones) were left exposed, while the floors (storey) built with mud or *simaismī* blocks had to be plastered to withstand the onslaught of sand-storms. Towards the early 1900s, there was no need for any wall preparation in order to accommodate hidden wirings or ducts, although when electricity was introduced to Jeddah around 1951 AD/1370 AH, wiring for electrical and telephone connections were still laid on the surface.

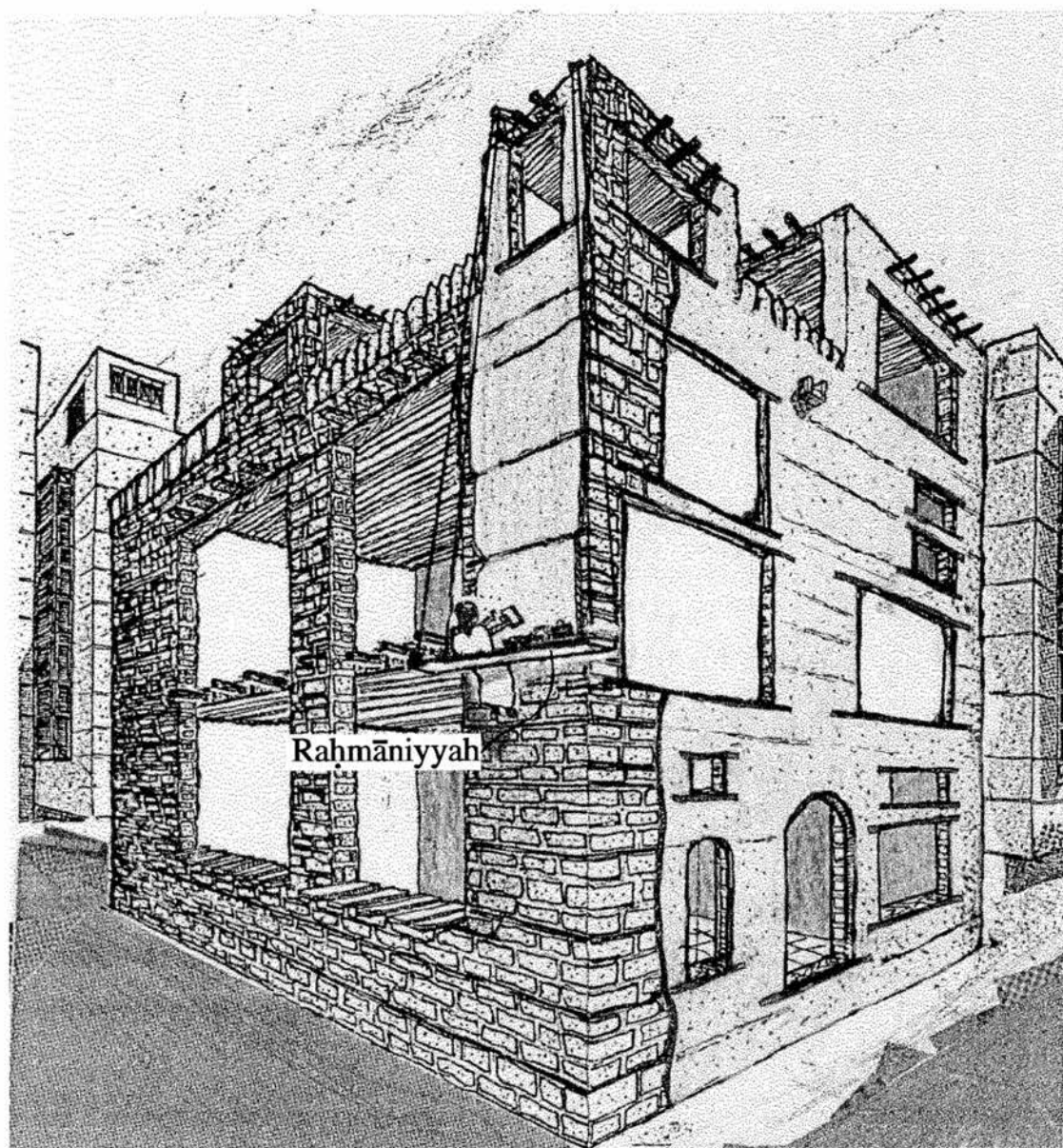


Fig. 6.14. *Liyāsāt al-bait* (plastering).

In earlier times<sup>31</sup>, plastering was not a common practice in the entire Ḥedjāz. This did not affect the buildings of Makkah and those of Al-Madinah which were built of stone<sup>32</sup>. In Jeddah, however, buildings which were not externally treated

<sup>31</sup> When *mu'allem* Şaḍāqah Karkāchin was 17 years old (1920 AD/1339 AH).

<sup>32</sup> Burckhardt's description of Makkah in the 1800s confirmed this when he observed that "Mekka (like Djiddah) contains many houses of three stories high; few at Mekkah are whitewashed; but the dark grey colour of the stone is much preferable to the glaring white that offends the eye in Djiddah." Burckhardt, John Lewis. *Travels in Arabia*. Cambridge: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1968. (First published in 1829). 145.

deteriorated rapidly and none of them are in existence today because their façades did not withstand the harsh climate of the city. *Mu'allemin* in Jeddah realized that they should treat the external surfaces of their buildings with a weather-resistant material. The first attempt at this was by applying a mix of lime-powder, sand and sawdust. Although this type of plaster was satisfactory for internal purposes, it was of little use outside since it cracked at the slightest change in temperature.

A subsequent technique was more successful. This involved applying a base coat of lime-powder and sand which was left to harden for two days and then covering with a coat of lime-powder, crushed stones and sometimes *zahra* (blue *nūrah* or ultramarine - which give the buildings a bluish colour). Towards the 20th century, weather-proofing measures were further improved. In addition to these two coats, buildings were given a preliminary rendering with a course mix of sand and lime-mortar to fill in the grooves and spaces. Also, as a finishing coat, a mix which was cooked in an underground oven for some days and consisted of a type of glue (first used in boat-building), *qāḥūd* (finely-crushed stones), lime-mortar and fine-sand was applied. There was no set specification for the ratio of these materials or any standard shade reference for paints.

In Al-Madinah, a similarly successful type of mix known as *bandjah soudā* (black-plaster) was used, which was a mix of lava-sand and mud. With all types of plaster, chalking of the paint was unavoidable in humid areas like Jeddah and Yanbu, and peeling-off was common in hot areas like Makkah and Al-Madinah, hence re-coating was a regular business for the *nawwārā* (*n.sing. nawwār* = plasterer). The process of internal plastering with *nūrah* is known as *tarkhīm*. A plasterer could be referred to as *nawwār*, *mulaiyyis*, *naḥḥāt*, or *naqqāsh*, the first of these being used interchangeably with any of the other three, depending on his particular specialization, be it painter, engraver or finishing plasterer. Some *naqqāshīn* were experts in carving the façade-stones on site, while other *naḥḥātīn* had their own workshops where they made *ḥadjar manḥūt* (ornamented-stones or ashlar) and gypsum-tiles which were bought individually by *mu'allemin* and other *nawwārā* and laid on site. Painted ornamental-stones were usually done by a *nawwār* using blue *nūrah* and later, different shades, colours and pigments.

Towards the 1960s, the *nawwār* began to become more adventurous. Whereas previously, the accepted routine was that he would follow the *mu'alle* after he had *rafa' yaddouh* (raised his hands = finished his task) and plaster and paint whatever was required, he now began to experiment with *ashkāl men demāghūh* (forms from his imagination). A free-standing arch, for example, would increasingly be seen with Corinthian, Ionic, or



Fig. 6.15. Nawwārā began to experiment with different forms.

Doric capitals, and further embellished with Indian or other sources of ornamentation or purely idiosyncratic devices. This development satisfied popular taste and intensified the innovative competition among the *nawwārā*.

Although the sources of many patterns were not necessarily identifiable to *mu'alle* Şaḍaqaḥ, one can see clearly that they were borrowed from European (Turkish and Greek), Morocco, India, Egypt, Syria, the Far-East (Chinese Imperial patterns),...etc. During site-visits with *mu'alle* Şaḍaqaḥ he used to closely inspect the ornamental work on building façades and columns and identify the individual/s who had done each particular job. He was also able to tell where the *nawwār* was in some cases replaced by another craftsman from variations in the carving, chiselling, depth of hammering or painting techniques, and overall pattern of ornamentation. Differences in *noqūsh* [engravings, ornaments] means different work by different *mu'alle*mīn, hence, different *nawwārā*.

#### **6.1.8. *Tarkīb al-abwāb, al-rawāshīn wa al-Shīshān* (Installation of doors, windows, blinds and wooden parapets)**

Once plastering the internal and external walls of the house was complete, the process of installing the *rawāshīn* began. This was a time of particular celebration for it was the first indication of the happy day when the client is going to receive his house. In fact the commencement of the *rawāshīn* installation was an advertisement for the completion of the house.



Generally speaking, the building of large ornamented *rawāshīn* made out of quality wood<sup>33</sup> was very costly, and only rich clients were able to afford them. Indian wood was the best material for *rawāshīn* construction. It was brought to Ḥedjāzī in lots of 20 boards known as *kordjah* (n.pl. *kordjāt*), each costing five golden guineas at the time ( $\approx$  £ 0.192 of today's value). A standard *rowshān* was made from *saisam*, *zān* or *tamr* (beech: red and white)<sup>34</sup>, and there was no alternation between one type of wood and another in any one *rowshān*. Clients of more modest means preferred to spend the bulk of their budget on interior features rather than putting it into more expensive external elevations. In such cases, cheaper, smaller and simpler *rawāshīn* sufficed. *Al-manqūr* or *al-mandjūr* (ornamented, worked) was the name given to a type of ornamentation which was used for a long period to decorate *rawāshīn* until it became synonymous with 'rowshān' and eventually lapsed. During the 1920s, glass was added to the structure of the *rowshān* to further control the flow of air and dust into rooms. This made them much heavier and more expensive as the types of glass used for windows carried similar connotations of richness and social status.

The *rowshān* was almost the centre of family life especially for younger members of the family. There they played cards, drank, slept, sat, watched the activities in the street,...etc.<sup>35</sup> The social importance of the shape, quality and size of *rawāshīn* and front doors ensured the continuance of a local timber and iron industries. The size and elaboration of these *rawāshīn*, besides the gypsum ornamentation on the building itself, were suggestive of the wealth and social status of a certain family.

Technically, the making of wooden fixtures like *rawāshīn*, doors, windows and parapets began with the laying-out of the ground floor of the house. Depending on the size of the house and that of these features, the timing was arranged such that as soon

---

<sup>33</sup> *Rawāshīn* made out of special types of wood like *sādj* (Indian teak) or *khashab jāwī* (Java teak) were beyond the reach of modest families who usually settled for *rawāshīn* made locally of *saisam* or *tamr* wood.

<sup>34</sup> These were the types of imported wood that I could most closely match with the *mu'allemin's* descriptions. There is a possibility that Cypress and Mahogany were used in the interiors, along with other types like Chestnut and Walnut. The obviously identified types of wood which were used in *rawāshīn* construction were Indian and Java teak. The former *rawāshīn* were not only made of Indian or Java wood, but some were also built and ornamented in these countries. They were in fact ready-made *rawāshīn*.

<sup>35</sup> There was a *dikkah* (platform) inside the *rowshān* covered with mattresses and stuffed cushions (*takkāiyyāt*, *masānid*) and allowed two adults to sit or sleep inside the *rowshān*. Large *rawāshīn* which were equipped with such facilities were named after their orientations as, for example, *al-rowshān al-shāmī* (Levant *rowshān* = Syrian = northern direction).

as the house was finished, *shīshān*, doors, *rawāshīn* and parapets would be ready to be added. These fixtures were treated in the same fashion as the other wooden structural elements of the building for weather and termite resistance. Their *dossor* or *masāmīr* (nails) were either imported from different sources, or were made locally by the *ḥaddādīn* (blacksmiths). As discussed in chapter five, carpenters were either regular members of one building-crew working under a *mu'allemin*, or they were independent craftsmen brought in by the client. In both cases they had to abide by the rules of the building *mu'allemin*, and were able to create their own forms and patterns within that limit<sup>36</sup>. Carpenters belonged to their own guild and were not socially or technically subordinate to the *mu'allemin*.

There were two distinct types of *rawāshīn*: the Turkish and the Egyptian (the latter was known as *mashrābiyyāh*). The Turkish type<sup>37</sup> was an earlier simple model of bay-windows, much like a *qafaş* (a three-sided wooden-cage) which did not incorporate any movable parts. Some *rawāshīn* of this type were topped with a *burnaiyyāh*<sup>38</sup> (hat, hood) to provide shade and reduce heat inside the *rowshān*. This was made out of thin, long and rough pieces of wood with no *naqir* (carving or ornamentations). Later on (around 1865 AD/1285 AH), when *mu'allemin* from Al-Madinah settled in Jeddah and Makkah, the Egyptian type was introduced to the local carpenters of these two cities. This type was built from finely-cut small pieces of wood, very elaborate in shape and incorporated a large number of controls and built-in *shīshān*. *Mashrābiyyāt* contained two to four rows of *shīshān* (shutters or louvres) which were folded in different directions. By adjusting the setting of the *shīshān*, the amount of light and breeze entering the house could be controlled. The

---

<sup>36</sup> The great diversity in the origins of those who came on pilgrimage meant that carpenters could gain a knowledge of wood-making in places as far as India and Java. Pilgrims taught the locals all kinds of skills in different aspects of building, but carpentry benefited most because the Ḥedjāzīes had very little experience in working with wood, not seeing much of it around! At the beginning they simply copied shapes and decorative patterns from the artifacts that the pilgrims brought but they soon began to create their own, based on the elements of their own environment.

<sup>37</sup> It is worth mentioning here that the *mu'allemin* disagreed with crediting the Turks for the *mashrābiyyah* or any element in the Ḥedjāzī house: "The turks governed Ḥedjāz, but they did not build it or contribute in it. Al-Ḥedjāz was built by it's people," as *mu'allemin* al-Rifī of Al-Madinah protested. One can understand, however, the rejection of the traditional Ḥedjāzīes to the history of the Turkish domination, and the bias that this rejection could cause.

<sup>38</sup> Also known to some as *rafraf* after the car's splash-board or mud-guard (apparently after the introduction of motor vehicles to Ḥedjāz in the 1820s).



non-movable pierced parts of the *mashrābiyyah* were made of turned dowels described by *mu'allem al-Rīfī* as *awṣāl khashab ṣaghīrah* [small pieces of wood].

A typical *rowshān* is divided into three main section (Fig. 6.16.): the base known as *arḍiyyah* (floor or base), the centre known as *jallsah* (sitting area), and the top known as the *tādj*, *burnaiṭah* or *rafrac* (crown or hood). The lower part of the *arḍiyyah* of the *rowshān* is the supporting base which is projected from the wall onto which the *rowshān* is fixed. This was not perforated

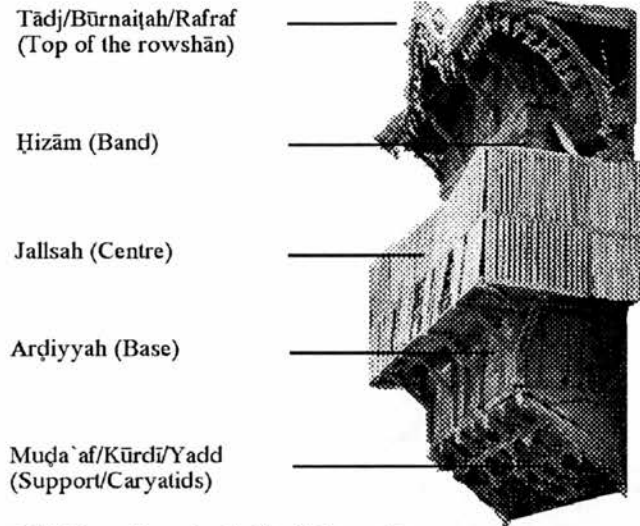


Fig. 6.16. The main parts of a Turkish *rowshān*.

so as to protect the privacy of the users (this part being at the lower half of the human body), while the main section of the *rowshān* - the centre where all the above described activities take place - was covered with shutters or grilles of very intricate woodwork known as *al-mandjūr*, *khashab kharṭ* allowing visual access from inside the *rowshān* to the outside. The upper part of the *rowshān* is again solid and projecting beyond the depth of the *rowshān* so as to provide shade and protect the central sitting-area from climatic elements, mainly sun rays and heat. In larger houses, it was common for *rawāshīn* to be vertically connected via a wooden frame known as the *ḥizām* (belt) to cover the entire façade of the house. Ornamentation of woodwork of all these parts depended on the budget of the client, type of wood used and availability of skilled *nadjārīn*. For example, the lower parts of the *rowshān* could be extensively decorated in the form of very intricate stalactites or could be made as simple as plain rectangular wooden-panels. In general, however, all wooden elements found today in the remaining Ḥedjāzī houses bare geometric or floral etched patterns.

To install these *rawāshīn*, extended pulleys were set up at the top of the house. Strong and long English maritime ropes were lowered from these to the ground where they were hooked by *rashshāqāt* (n.sing. *rashshāqah* = hooks) onto specially-fitted knobs at the corners of the *rowshān* (Fig. 6.17.). The bottom of the *rowshān* was tied

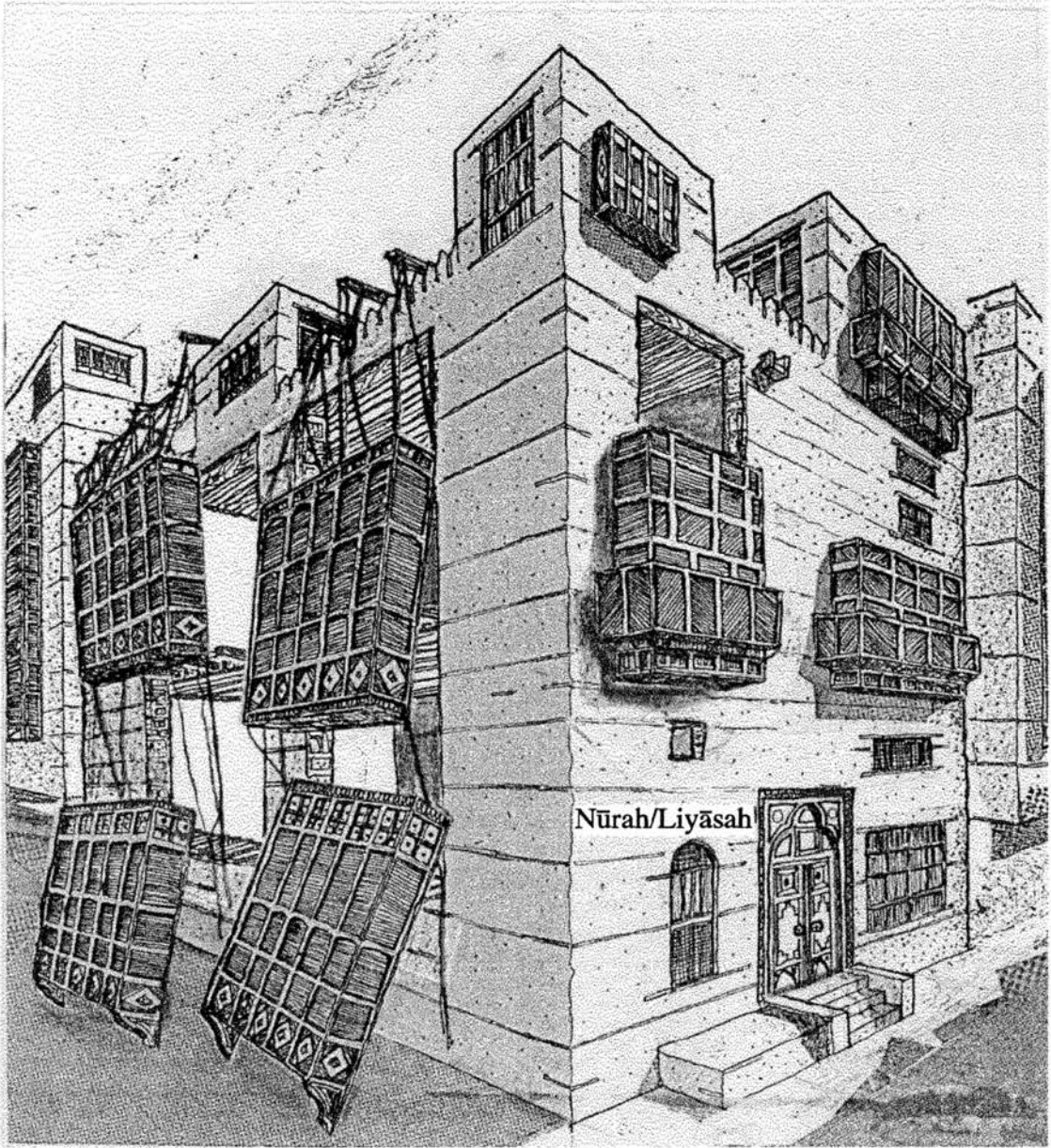


Fig. 6.17. *Rawāshīn* and *shīsh* installation (Egyptian types being fitted).

with two ropes at each end which were controlled by two men while it was being hauled up so as to prevent any damage to it or to the surface of the building. When it was level with the opening prepared for it, it was received by two *nadjār* assistants who fixed it to the projecting wooden joists or stouts - which were deeply embedded at the base of the *rawshān* opening - known as *mūqā'af*, *kurdī*<sup>39</sup> (caryatids) or *yadd* (hand). Because these joists were tied into the structure of the house, there were no

<sup>39</sup> In Al-Madinah, the term *kurdī* refers to wooden-frames and supports that are painted and decorated to separate the *iwān* from the *durqā'ah* (types of rooms). They usually take the form of corbelling stalactites.

need for any further support for the *rowshān* (unlike the old Turkish type which had to be fixed to the building using independent dowels). There were, however, cheaper and simpler ways of achieving the functions of the *rowshān* (while missing the projection into the street, hence, its wind-catching properties), one of which is through the use of *shīsh*. The most common design of this type of windows is known as *gandāliyyah*, after the Indian *gandal* wood used for its framing and construction. This was either a round or pointed-arch opening fitted with a simple two-leaf louvered-shutters.

The installation of blinds and shutters, doors and parapets (known as *a'rāsh al-summār* = thrones for night entertainment) was an easier operation because they were all lighter than *rawāshīn*, and because the frames into which they fitted were already in place and ready to receive them. Parapets were substituted with coloured baked-bricks known as *adjur* (*n.sing. adjār* = backed clay-bricks) in towns like Makkah where it was known as *shābūrah* (porous). These were arranged in special formation that simulated the lattice woodwork in terms of being perforated (by spacing the bricks at certain distances from each other) to allow visual access (from inside the *khārdjah*) and ventilation. It is noted, however, that the *adjūr* techniques is more extensive in Makkah than the rest of Ḥedjāz (although wood, once available, was equally accessible for all the craftsmen of Ḥedjāz).

The emphasis Ḥedjāzīes gave to entrances and main gates led to special treatment of these by clients and craftsmen. Front doors usually have double heights with elaborate brick, stonework and decoration. These were fitted with large wooden doors, usually two-leafed with the right-leaf having a smaller door or entryway known as *khūkhah* (*lit. peach* = wicket or false-door). Specially designed two-leaf doors were somewhat heavier and required stronger frame-supports. These were only opened to admit large loads while the *khūkhah* was the main entrance to the house. During the 1950s, these doors were in fashion and became something of a status symbol. Porticos also came to be a desirable feature of house-entrances and this gave the *mu'allem's* and *nadjār's* added knowledge and experience of wooden structures and the different means of supporting them. Such developments created an order of prestige among *nadjārīn* as they competed in the production of elaborate and highly decorative wooden fixtures, false-ceilings, book-shelves, kitchen-fitments, specialized wooden furniture like *saḥḥārāt*, *kimār* (cupboards), *saisam*, *fatiyyah*, and *rakkālah* (cloth-chests).

The upper most part of the building, usually occupied by a *khārdjah*, was decorated with *'araiyyis* (dolls or brides) that crowned the building's sky-line. These crestings were made of carved coral-blocks which were plastered against weathering. Most mosques and houses of Ḥedjāz were crowned in the same fashion for - at least - the past 200 years. In large merchant houses, the same patterns and module of crestings would crown lower and upper parts of *mashrābiyyāt* (*tādj*, *burnaiṭah* and *muḍa 'af*), the terraces as well as the roof-top parapets.

#### 6.1.9. *Taslīm al-bait* (Presenting the house to the client)

It was very important for both the client and the *mu'alleṃ* to have the house finished before the beginning of the *ḥadj* season and other local or religious festivity. This means that the owner could receive a large number of expected guests during these special periods, and the possibility of renting the house to expected pilgrims for a good sum of money that would compensate for the cost of the building. Getting the family to move to their new home was also considered as a complementary celebration if synchronized with another happy event like a marriage, the Muslim *'īd* or the *ḥadj* season. For the *mu'alleṃ*, this meant a relief of a major responsibility so that he can execute his *ḥadj* or join in the festivity of the *'īd*. It also meant the reception of his *odjrah* (earnings) which he can make use of at these particular occasions.

The presentation of the house to the owner was a happy occasion for the neighbourhood. After a long time - ranging from one to four years - it was finally time to receive the family home (Fig. 6.18). The owner gathered a number of the *ḥāra* elders as witnesses to the preliminary procedure of *tamtīr al-bait* (measuring the house and approval of sizes). The *mu'alleṃ* and his assistants, accompanied by the client and whatever members of his community, would take measurements room by room and document them to check that they matched the initial client-*mu'alleṃ* oral or written *'ittifāq*, *'aqd* (contract). Although generally the client was present at intervals throughout construction and was aware of the overall structural form of the house, he was not always in position to judge particulars before its final completion. The system of *'ittifāq odjrah* (daily-payments) gave the client a better chance of daily-inspection of the structure - before paying the *mu'alleṃ* and his team - than cases of *'ittifāq mūdjawadah* (lump-sum contract).



If the client was satisfied with the results of the *tamtīr*, this document would be sealed by the *mu'alleṃ*, the client, and at least two witnesses. It would then be submitted to the local judge as a discharge of the *mu'alleṃ's* responsibilities, a proof of completion of the house to the client's satisfaction, and a registration of home-ownership by the client. On the other hand, if the client expressed the need for any modifications, a period of time - depending on the extent of these - was given to the *mu'alleṃ* to undertake the changes. This situation arose mostly in cases where the client was a sea-faring man for example and did not have the chance to inspect the house at least once at the completion of each stage.

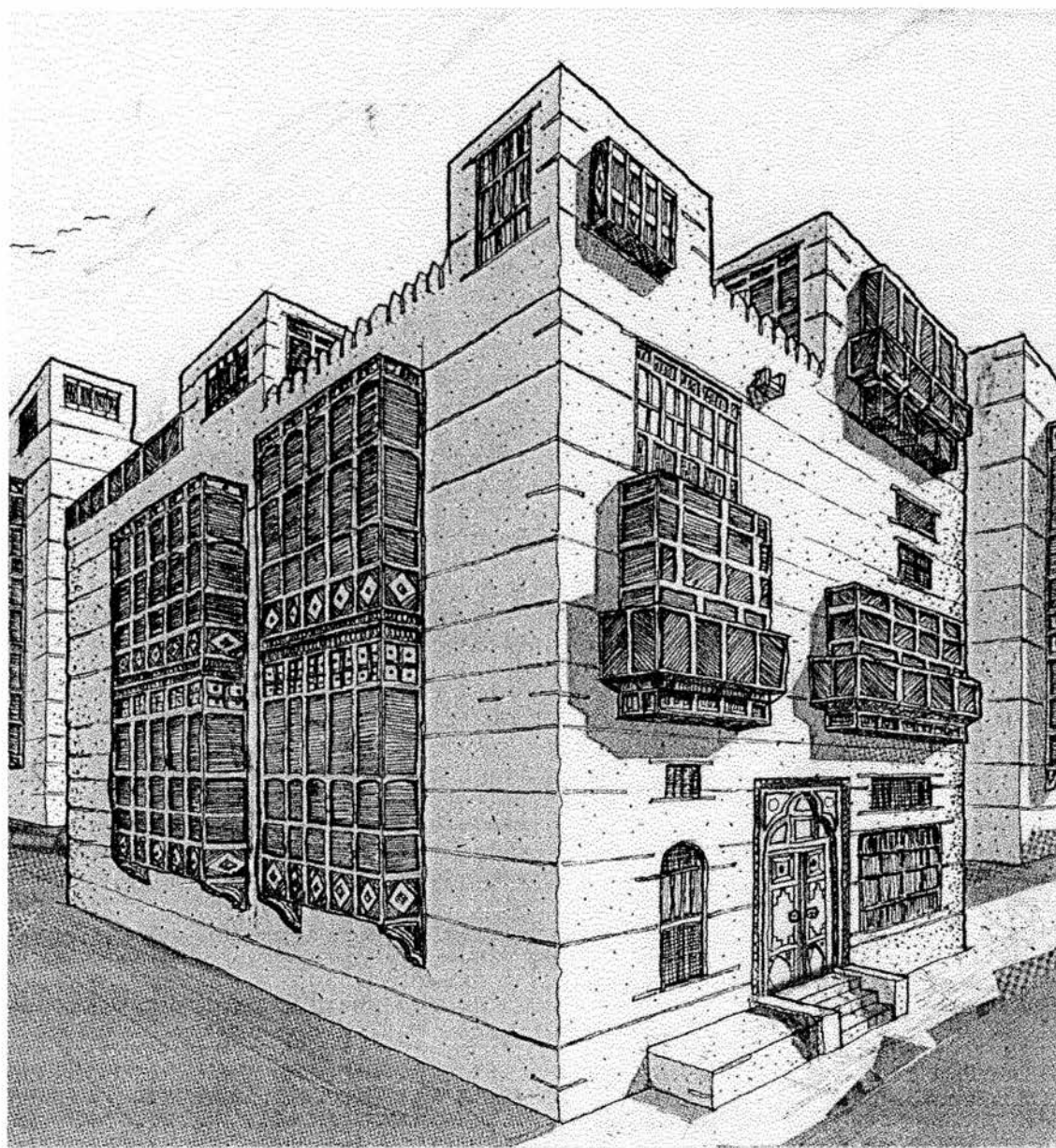


Fig. 6.18. The house as presented to the client.

This final episode ended with a ceremonial dinner held at the owner's new house. The guests included the *'omdah* of the *ḥāra*, prominent residents and neighbours, the *mu'allem* and the senior members of his team (e.g., *garārī*). This also represented a declaration of the privacy of the house. Guests were not shown around the house, even if no female family members were present. The house become *bait* (Home) as soon as the owner receives it and his family name is associated with it. The upper-floors of the house would then be considered as the *ḥarm* (the most private quarters which is restricted to the man of the house and to the female members of the family). Accordingly, it was considered critically improper for other men to enter these areas.

#### 6.1.10. *Taosī' al-bait/Ziyādat al-bait* (Extension of the house)

After a number of years of occupying the house, an increase in the number of family members might be anticipated. As a result of sons' marriages, or the moving-in of an elder member of the family, an extension to the house could become necessary. This extension could be vertical or lateral. In either case, the services of a *mu'allem* were necessary. He could be the original builder of the house or another *mu'allem* from the guild, although the former was always preferred as he was expected to know the building better than anybody. During the early 19th century, provision was made in the construction of houses for anticipated future extensions. For example, land-plots were bought larger than the initially required area of the house (so as to expand laterally), and structures were built to cater for much heavier loads than those imposed at the time of construction (so as to expand vertically).

Vertical extensions requiring major alteration to the house's structure began with reinforcing the foundations and the ground-floor. Foundations were reinforced by digging a trench around the house to insert large wooden beams and stones (sometimes by suspending the house: both systems are explained later in this chapter). Reinforcement of the ground floor consisted of either another course of stone around the base of the house (an extra load-bearing wall), or by supporting the walls with large *ḥadjar baḥarī* (or any type of stone, depending on the locality) in the form of *da'amāt ḥadjar* (buttresses). Headroom in vertical extensions was much lower than that of the original part of the house, as were the sizes of *rawāshīn* in order to minimize the additional load on the building (lighter *shīshān* were used instead).



In compact areas, where houses were attached to each other, with common load-bearing and retaining-walls, the above-mentioned procedures were either inoperable or unnecessary. Vertical extensions were simply erected where the weight of extra floors could be distributed over the entire row of buildings. This could be done up to a safe level of overall development in terms of the common load-bearing capacity having due regard to already existing extensions. Such a system required constant monitoring by *sheikh al-mu'allemin* who had to personally inspect the house requiring extension before granting any permission. It was an obligation of home-owners to get such permissions before attempting any alterations to their houses.

Although community meetings were always conducted before granting extension-permissions - normally attended by the head of the guild, the *'omdah* of the *ḥāra*, and the home-owners of the neighbourhood - this system of *'ḥammil alā jārak'* (charge your loads on/or load your weight on the neighbouring house)<sup>40</sup> resulted in later disputes between home-owners who were not granted permission to extend and those who had already done so up to the permissible limit for the row as a whole.

Towards the 1930s, the stubborn unwillingness of some home-owners to abide by the rules of the head of the guild and the age of the houses led to the disastrous collapse of several buildings in the old city and the imprisonment of some members of prominent families who had unlawfully extended their houses causing over-loads on their own, as well as neighbouring houses.

On the other hand, lateral expansion of houses was very limited in most Ḥedjāzī cities because of the severe shortage of land, especially in Jeddah (before the removal of its walls) and in Makkah (because of the topography and the desire of its residents to be close to the Holy Mosque). In Jeddah, the removal of the city walls in 1947 AD/1367 AH, relieved the population pressures in the central areas of the city and made lateral extension more of a possibility but with the still high price of available land in these areas, it remained an option open only to rich merchants.

Building annexes to existing houses was not a major task compared with vertical extensions. The *mu'allemin* - bound by the size and location of the extra area

---

<sup>40</sup> The notion of party walls was very common throughout Ḥedjāz, where most houses developed as row houses in closely-packed residential areas (most common in Makkah and Al-Madinah).

of land - would look for a position in which to connect the annex to the original house in a way that was consistent with the pattern of domestic routine and maintained the privacy requirements of the structure. In some rare cases where the land available for expansion was separated from the main house by an alley or a street, the latter would be connected with the new one via a *maṣṭabah* or a bridge which would be raised from the street level by about three to six meters. If the *mu'allemin* could not find an appropriate junction for expansion, the annex had to have its own entrance and internal privacy and utility arrangements and stand as a small house on its own.

#### 6.1.11. *Ta'liq al-bait* (Suspending the structure of the house)

During the early years of the 18th century, when recently-built houses *raiyyahat*, *waghazat*, *qaraṣat* (settled), *inba'adjat* (buckled) or *tashaqqaqat* (cracked)<sup>41</sup>, they were either abandoned and left to decay, or were externally supported with logs and the cracks filled with small stones and mortar. Naturally, these houses did not survive very long after that (Fig. 6.19.). Through the years, *mu'allemin* gained experience of dealing with the problem with varying degrees of success. Then they learned (source unknown) that it was possible to lift the building off the ground, partially (Fig. 6.22.) or wholly (Fig. 6.23.), correct the foundations beneath it and then put it down again, or simply remove the buckled stones and replace them by *ṭalqīṭ* (remove and replace).

This method was based on the temporary replacement of any load-bearing structural element of the house, be it a wall, a column or an arch, by strong wooden-pillars. Obviously not every *mu'allemin* had the courage to undertake it, let alone could master the art of doing so. In Jeddah, for example, only two or three *mu'allemin* were experts in this procedure, which added to the demand for their services and their social status. A very few *mu'allemin* went to the extreme of suspending the structure of the house while people were carrying on their normal life in the upper-floors, content in the knowledge that these *mu'allemin* were more than experts in the method:

Not every house had to be completely suspended, but when it happened, I used to sleep underneath the house, while it was dangling in the air, every night until it was fixed so as to make people feel

---

<sup>41</sup> This was mainly because of the insufficient allowance for the type of soil, poor foundations, a rise in the water-table, and/or because of structural over-loads.

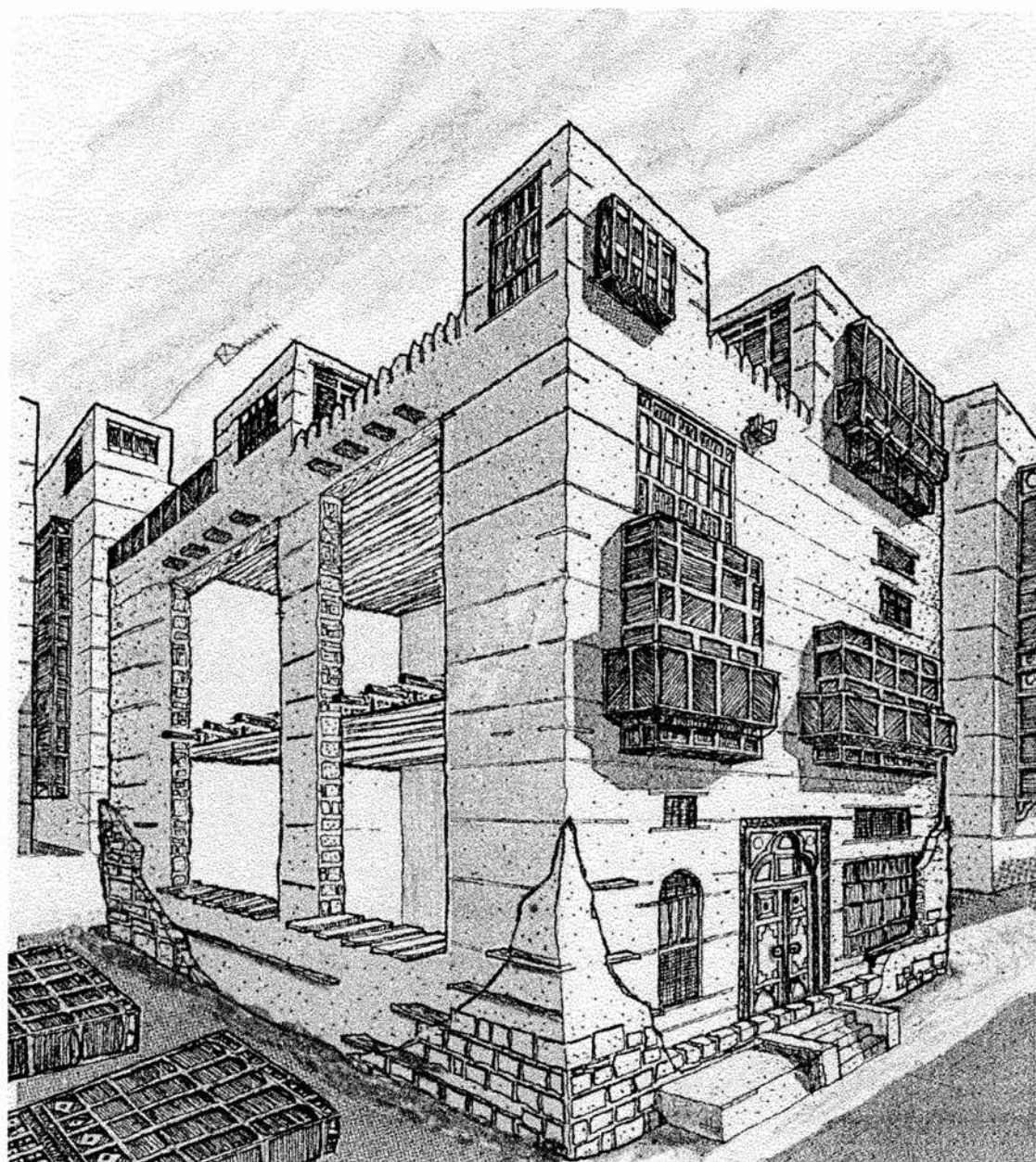


Fig. 6.19. Severe settlement of the structure.

secure knowing that I would not risk or sacrifice my life, my family and my workmen for any glory or fame. When it was time to take away the walls of the ground floor, I stood there, underneath the structure, while my own workmen fled the site. I also stood there when they removed the scaffolding, and women were crying-out loud: *alḥāqū hadā al-mu'allem al-khibil* [rescue this crazy *mu'allem*]. A few years later, when every body in the town knew how good I was at my work, and that I could tell by leaning or putting my hand on the wall of a building that it was going to split. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

In cases of minor structural settlement, suspension took place only in affected areas. Real problems were presented by cases of severe settlement and complete distortion of the shape of the house, or when cracks appeared in *faḥil al-daradj* (the staircase-shaft as the main pillar in the structure of the house)<sup>42</sup>. Suspension began with a detailed inspection of the whole structure by the *mu'alleṃ*, externally and internally. He identified areas of damage and their extent so as to determine the number of floors to be suspended, the possibilities of a successful levelling and the length of wooden posts or logs needed for the operation. Once he decided on these details and made his plans, he checked the current market for the availability of the materials needed for suspension.

A part of these materials were very strong and thick Indian logs (Indian oak), described by *mu'alleṃ* Şaḍaqaḥ as "*zaiyy al-ḥadīd*" (as solid as steel). These came from India in sections known as *jāriyyah*, each of which had a standard length of eight, nine and/or ten meters, and a thickness ranging between 2.5 cm to 25 cm. These were divided into two main categories: *ḥāmil wa maḥmūl* (load-bearing and load-borne). The load-borne beams were the smaller of these lengths, which were inserted in the wall to be rebuilt immediately above the affected area (i.e., bricks or stones below this level would be removed). For a wall length of seven meters, a hole was pierced every 80 cm horizontally in the sides of the building along the required level. These short beams were then thrust in through the holes to the other side of the wall. Once fixed in place, these beams were called *mughrass* (an insert).

These Indian inserts could not withstand the high bending moments caused by the loads of more than one floor. So *mu'alleṃ* maintained them in use, but only as load-bearing agents, while the load-borne elements were replaced by *mughrass Jāwī* or *sāmūr* (Java inserts) which proved to sustain much higher bending-moments than Indian wood. Once all inserts were in place, the *alwāḥ al-hindī* (Indian boards) were fixed to them diagonally to form an 'A-shaped' structural support (i.e., trestle, horse). At their base, these *ta'liqāt*, *ta'ālīq* (n.sing. *ta'liqah* = upstanding supports, braces) were driven into the ground to a depth of eight centimetres and stabilized by the use of large stones. *Ta'ālīq* were placed side by side with a maximum distance of one meter between each of them, while their footprints were to avoid being supported by

---

<sup>42</sup> In such cases, the whole ceiling of the area where the deformed staircase exist would be removed.



the weaker foundation of the building. In areas where they had to be supported on a weaker soil, large *ḥadjar baḥarī* were dug into the ground where the A-frames were to stand so as to ensure maximum stability of the frames.

Having done that, the load of the floors above the level of the inserts was transferred to the trestles below that level. In the case of large *rowshān* opening, two of the thickest boards were laid horizontally to form a lintel support at the bottom side of the rectangle known as *ḥizām* (wooden belt). To replace the wall removed gradually, the weaker stones of the affected walls were removed one by one, waiting for each of these trestles to receive the loads of the walls above it and settle, until the whole floor was completely removed. All other vertical components of the house like staircases and air-shafts were treated in the

same manner. *Salālim naqqālah* (movable wooden-ladders) were erected to enable the workmen and others to move around, while connections to cess-pools and rainwater-collectors were diverted to external tanks by means of wooden gutters.

When the foundations of the building were exposed, they were completely removed up to a depth of three meters. Small stones and sand were replaced by large *ḥadjar baḥarī*, and large amounts of water-insulating lime was poured in. When tar paints were introduced to the country in the 1950s, they were mixed with thick mud and used - besides as rainwater insulation on roofs - as the solum upon which the new

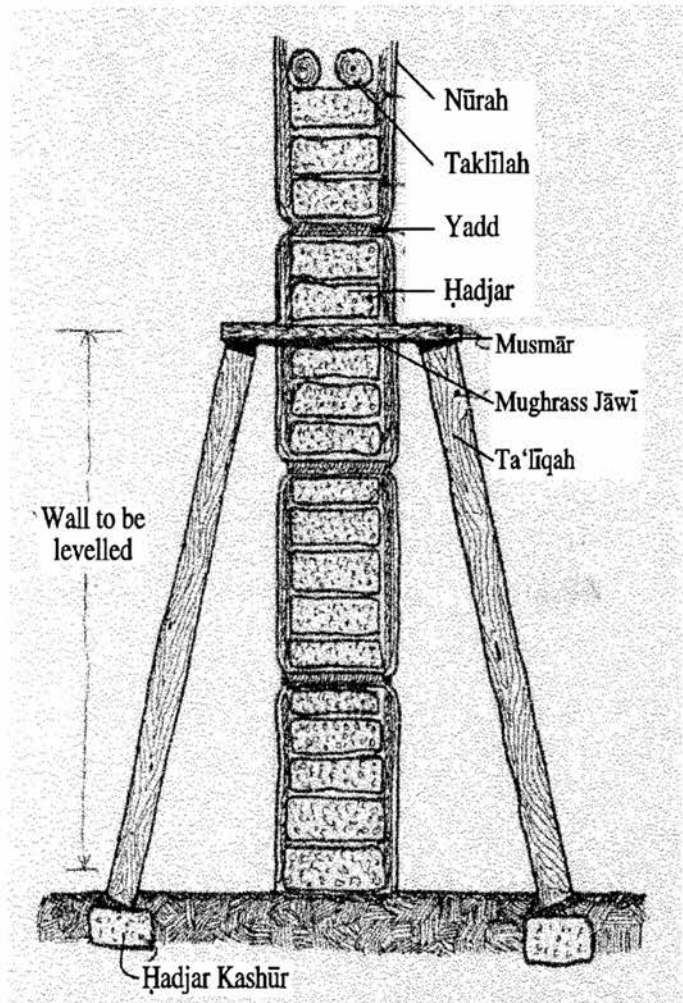


Fig. 6.20. Details of the suspension technique.

foundations were laid. By generous reinforcement of foundation, *mu'allemin* thought that they would be taking no risks this time. The client, who saw his whole life collapsing with his house, did not mind paying for this either.

Once the foundations were solidly in place, the re-building of the ground floor began by using larger stones and less mortar, following the same building procedure as in the original construction of the house, inserting wooden logs every six courses of stone until the level of the *mughrass* was reached. According to the thickness of the gap between this level and that of the last course of stones, the filling material was decided. If the gap happened to be over 12 cm in height, small stones were custom-cut slightly larger than this gap, otherwise it was filled with the right thickness of the same wood used for the suspension inserts (Indian wood). It was very important for the thickness of the filling material to raise the trestles from the

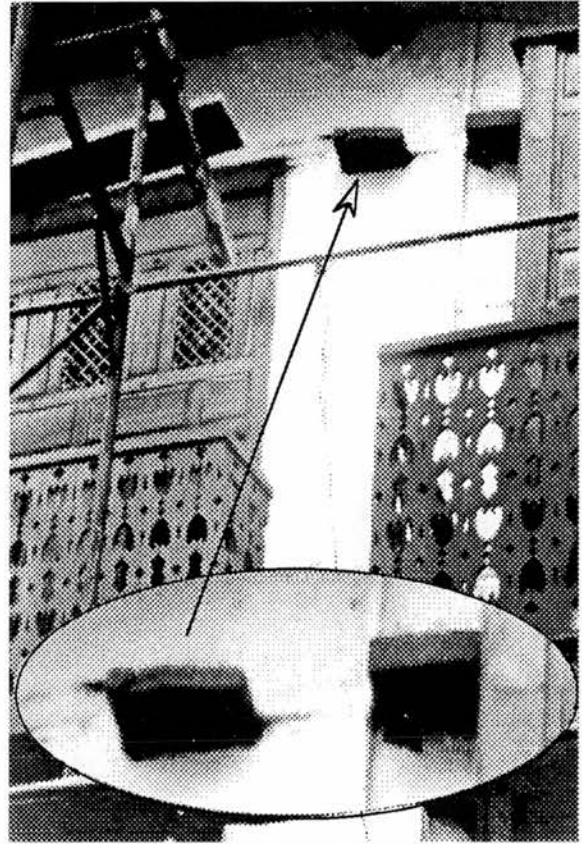


Fig. 6.21. Wooden inserts are left in the walls after restoration.

ground for a few millimetres. This was to help the workmen to remove the trestles, and prevent any sudden impact on the newly-built walls caused by the released loads of the upper floors once the trestles were removed. It was not necessary then to remove the horizontally-inserted *maghāress* from the walls. Buildings where this suspension process was executed had these *maghāress* still projecting from their external walls (Fig. 6.21.).

We suspended houses for *ramramah* or *tarmīm* [restoration]. If the owner felt that his house was becoming *shaiyybah* [an old-man], he came to me to *aroddoh shabāb* [turn it into a young-man]. It is a more enjoyable job when one sees the admiration in the eyes of the client when he sees his house becoming a bridegroom on his wedding day. (*Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).



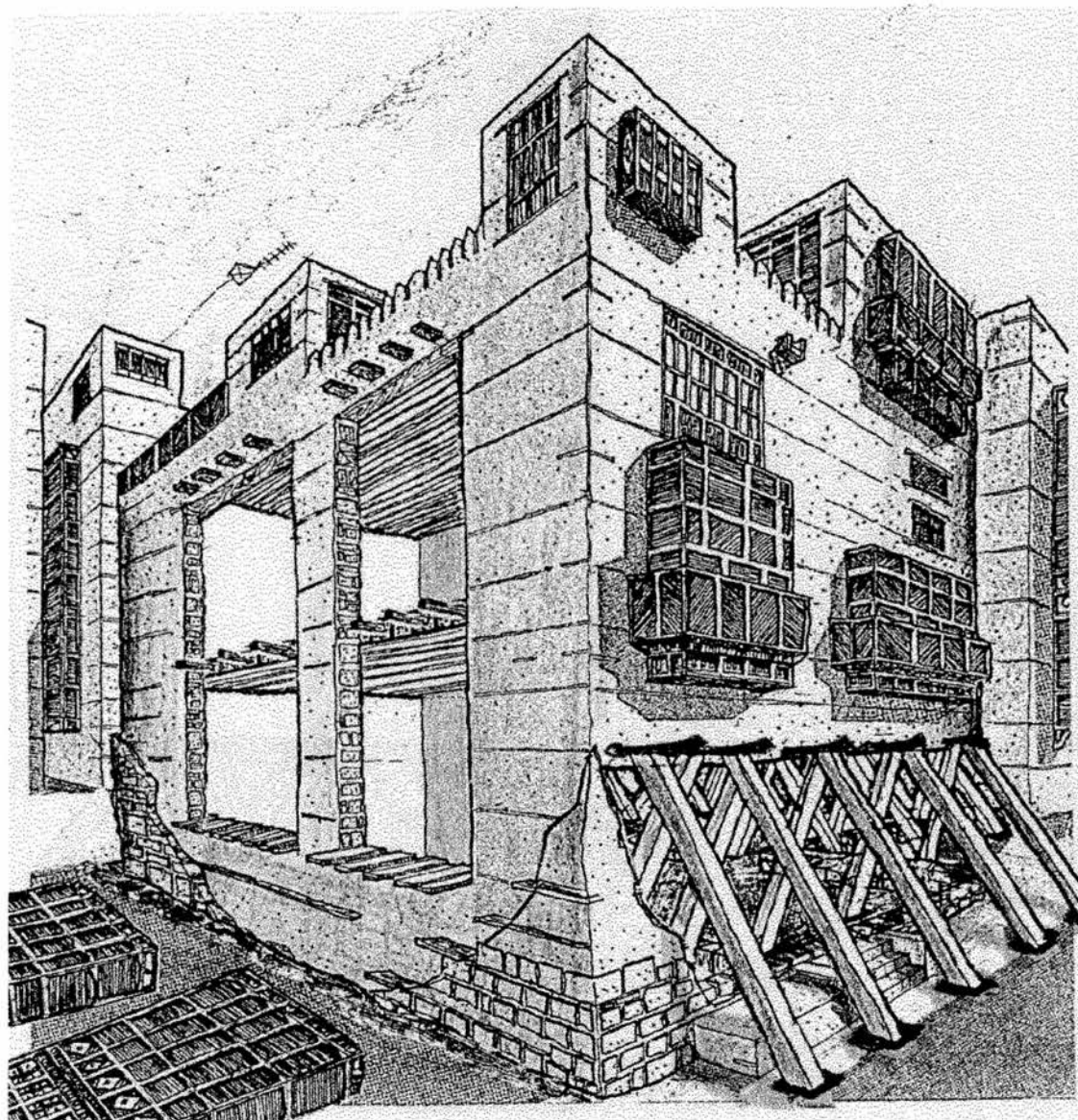


Fig. 6.22. Partial suspension of the house.

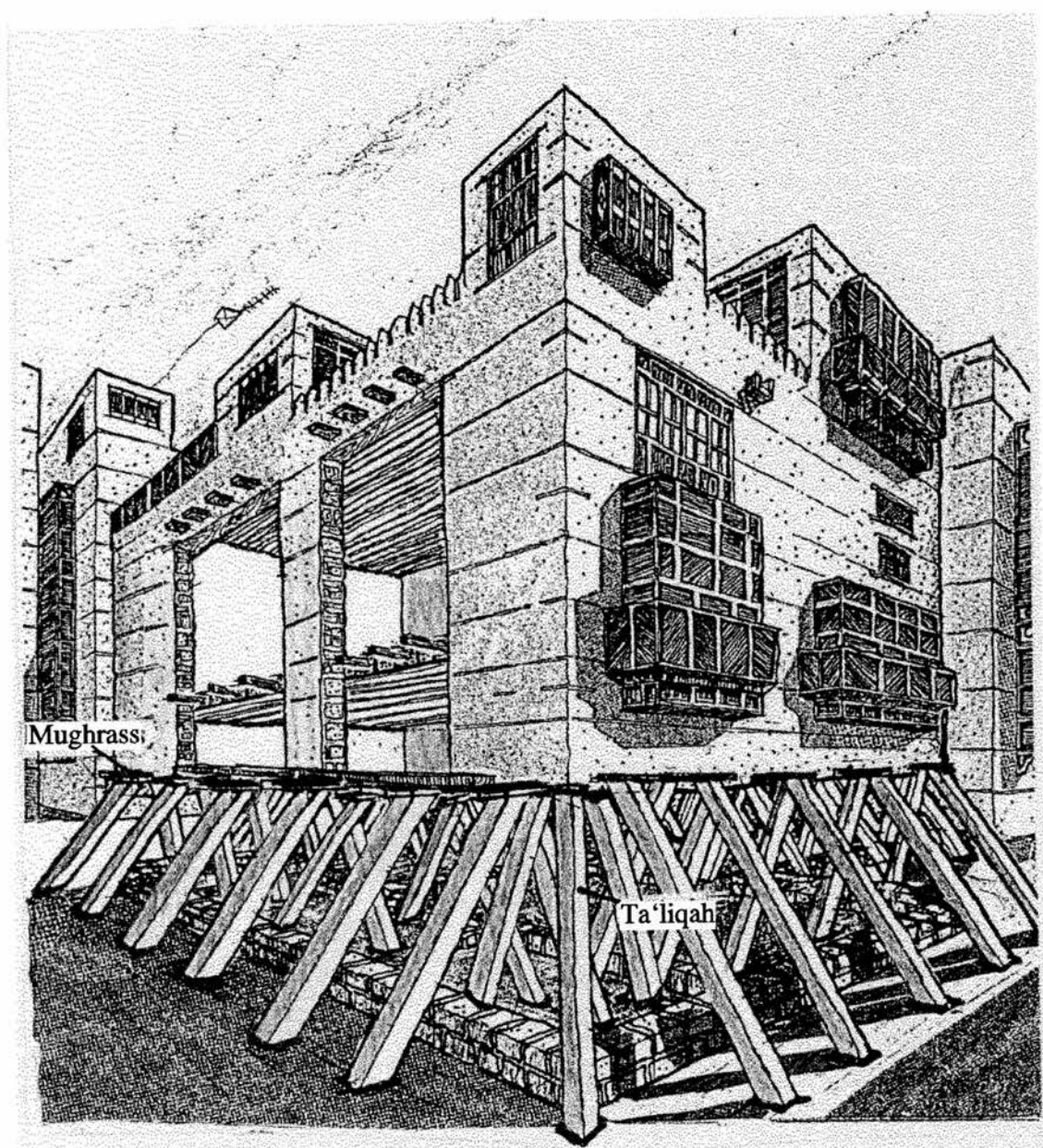


Fig. 6.23. A case of complete suspension.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SOCIETY AND THE HOUSE

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE HOUSE AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

---

#### Introduction

The characteristic that distinguished the traditional Hedjāzī society - like all traditional societies - is order; the sense of coherence in every aspect of life. In this traditional Muslim society, this order was derived from a shared religious faith and origin, and that validated the tradition. Islam as a religion and a way of life served as the basis for the organisation of that society, land, dwelling, and family. However, this traditional interpretation embodied other cultural doctrines that inspired every act and every artefact. This chapter is an attempt to understand this metaphysical aspect that inspired and gave life to the physical structure of the dwelling in traditional Hedjāzī society. It is an attempt to investigate the unique relationship between this traditional Muslim society, its houses and the universe. By examining the nature of the home environment, the universe and its creation, sacredness and the position of man in it, it should be possible to see reflections of such world views in the built environment produced by that society.

I shall first argue that traditional Hedjāzīs saw man and the universe as divine creations - a concept which will help to prove that their homes represented the sacred creation of man who is but a tiny portion of the holistic creation of the universe. I shall illustrate my arguments by examining the relationship between the universe, man and the house from the traditional Hedjāzī point of view, emphasising the central traditional ideas that tied the perfect creation of man to the construction of the house. I will cite a few examples of traditional Hedjāzī homes as representation of both man and the universe. This should help the reader to see how these ideas were expressed in the house, whether through the rituals of building or the form of the traditional dwelling itself. Finally, I will connect the three themes (man, house and universe) together to further illustrate the role of such home-producing rituals and their manifestation in and around the traditional Hedjāzī house - which is the aim of this chapter.

## 7.1. Rituals and symbolism associated with the house

### 7.1.1. The traditional Ḥedjāzī perception of man and the universe

He has created the Heavens and the earths in just proportion, and has given you shapes, and made your shapes beautiful: and to Him is the final goal. (*Qur'ān, Sūra LXIV: 3, Tagābun*)<sup>1</sup>.

Assuredly the creation of the Heavens and the earth is greater than man: yet most men do not understand (*Qur'ān, Sūra XL: 57, Ghāfer*).

From an Islamic point of view, the universe is perfectly created by God, the Perfect Creator of all things. It is beautiful in the sense that it is adapted for all the functions it has to perform, and thus, everything in it is in order. Since man is also a divinely-created being, he too is ordered within the universe. Man is simply asked to learn from the universe how to be in order, how to obey and look for God in the signs, indices and his own self. Any attempt by man to do otherwise is considered to be a clear act of disobedience and a challenge to the convictions of God.

The analogy of this relationship could be summarized briefly as seen in figure (7.1.) as follows: the main purpose of man in the universe is to worship God (*Qur'ān, Sūra LI: 56, Zāriyāt*). God equipped man with the faculties that will assist him in life; Islam provides man with the proper way of life that make his intentions and actions fully devoted to God. Therefore, for man to obey and to follow God's order in the universe, he must live, eat, drink, marry, work and so on for the sake of God. This is the sole purpose of man's existence.

The universe has no will but to worship God, it will not deviate from His commands because God has protected it from doing so. Man on the other hand was not so protected; he was given the choice to obey or disobey, and therefore the sacred balance of this divine creation could be disturbed by the creature itself. In general, Muslims - including traditional Ḥedjāzīs - believe in an Absolute Creator who 'designed' a balanced, perfect universe to make it easier for them to implement His injunctions in the universe. This universe is the ideal that can help man to be a God-fearing being, recognising God's Oneness and His *sharī'ah*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Qur'ānic verses are quoted from the translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali. American Trust Publications: USA, 1977. 2nd Edition.



### 7.1.2. The traditional Ḥedjāzī perception of man and the house

...everyone wants God's forgiveness, good health and God's mercy and *sutrah* [shelter <sup>2</sup>] in this life and in the hereafter, and then a [good] house...but, after all, whatever God bestows upon me is good. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī*, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

In order to comprehend this culturally-based experience of the personal and architectural meaning of a place, one must understand how traditional Ḥedjāzīs lived and how they incorporated settlements and shelters into the pattern of their everyday existence. While this is the subject of chapter eight, a brief picture will be presented in this chapter to introduce the reader to further aspects of the traditional Ḥedjāzī culture. But before we start examining this relationship we first have to understand the particular Ḥedjāzī view of the purpose of creation.

The difference between the ideal Islamic view of the purpose of creation and the traditional Ḥedjāzī version is expressed in figures (7.1.) and (7.2.) While the ideal Islamic principle that the sole purpose of man on earth is to worship God and recognize His greatness through the signs of the universe, the traditional culture of Ḥedjāz shifted that priority so that man's living place in the universe came first. And from this position he should live in accordance to God's laws. All their intentions and actions were somehow related to home-making, so that dwelling and living coincided to the extent that living itself became - culturally - an act of worship. This conception was the product of a set of family beliefs, values and associations that invested the home with significance.

However, we need to note that the difference between the ideal Islamic point of view and that of traditional Ḥedjāzī culture is that the latter tries to assimilate the universe and its sacredness to get closer to God from a fixed position in that universe, while in the former, the universe test man and assists him in his mission in the

---

<sup>2</sup> *Sutrah* in this sense is also used to mean satisfaction with what God bestowed upon someone; shielding from evil, jealous or covetous eyes; protection from being exposed (e.g., by a scandal); or mercy from God's sever punishment or malign fate.



universe (i.e., to worship)<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile, the means (i.e., the universe) of recognizing the supremacy of God remains intact in both cases.

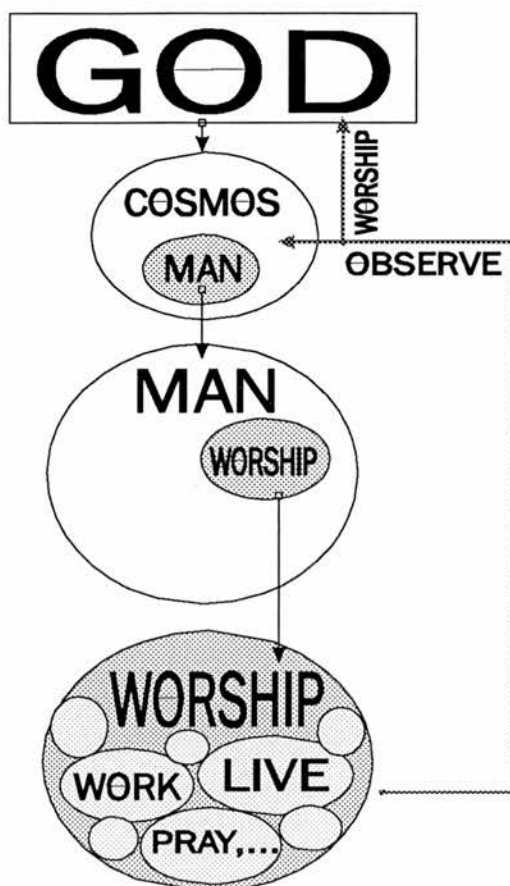


Fig. 7.1. The main purpose of man in the universe is to worship God.

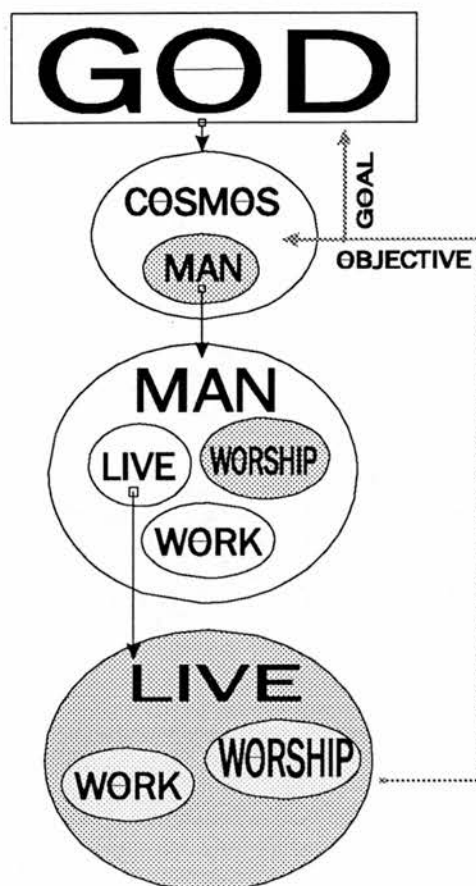


Fig. 7.2. The traditional Ḥejjāzī culture shifted that priority.

The process through which traditional Ḥejjāzīes established their position in the universe, and built their homes as a microcosm to the previous argument (Fig. 7.3.). First, the understanding of the perfect qualities of the universe were known and taught from generation to generation, then they were subject to different socio-cultural interpretations which were later manifested in concrete terms by the *mu'allemin*. The

<sup>3</sup> The following two passages from the Qur'ān:

"Behold ! in the creation of the Heavens and the earths; in the alternation of the night and day; in the sailing of the ships though the ocean for the profit of man-kind; in the rain which God sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of winds, and the clouds which they trail like slaves between the sky and the earth; - (here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise." (Sūra II: 164, *Baqarah*). Also "O My servants who believe! truly, spacious is my earth: therefore serve ye me - (and Me alone)!" (Sūra XXIX: 56, *'Ankabūt*).

final aim was to create a macrocosm in which members of society would be situated. However, one would expect this process of universal conceptualization to continue to a point where man - certain of his place in the universe - would feel free and unrestrained in his life. But in this culture, the idea of man standing alone in the universe was unthinkable, for this was considered to be a state of total nakedness. Dwelling could not have been reduced to an activity that the traditional Ḥedjāzī could perform alongside others: "He who leaves his house, degrades himself."<sup>4</sup> A majority of my informants considered homelessness as non-existence<sup>5</sup>: "...if you do not live in your own house, you are not living at all."<sup>6</sup> An example of this is the usage of the words 'live' and 'dwell' synonymously. This is an indication of the extent to which taking a place in the universe was an integral condition of the Ḥedjāzī's life and 'being.'

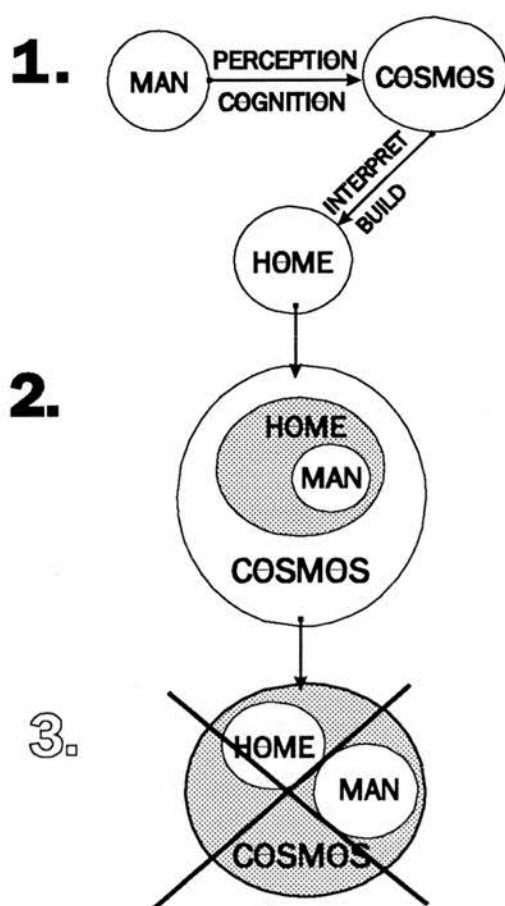


Fig. 7.3. The idea of man standing alone in the universe was unthinkable.

If we take this concept a step further, we will find that the term 'individual' or 'man' in the Ḥedjāzī dialect does not refer to a single person, but rather to the group in general<sup>7</sup>. In the Qur'ān when a single person is addressed it is usually the whole *ummah* which is called upon<sup>8</sup>. Likewise, the Ḥedjāzī word *dunyah* (world), is

<sup>4</sup> A traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb.

<sup>5</sup> "Alienation [absence from home] is misery itself," is another traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> There is a traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb about the merit of the group as opposed to the individual: "even death with the group is mercy."

<sup>8</sup> As in the verse "Thau man! verily thou art ever toiling on towards thy Lord - painfully toiling - but thou shalt meet Him." (Qur'ān, Sūra LXXXIV: 6, 'Inshīqāq).

synonymous to Ḥedjāzīes with universe, lifetime and 'arḍ (land). The word 'arḍ, means nature, house, lane, neighbourhood or a whole region. These two words (*dunyah* and 'arḍ) constituted a set of geographical locations and time-scales that were used in the Ḥedjāz to mean 'home.' Examples of traditional Ḥedjāzī proverbs like: "*A house in a land (place, town, country, region) that is not yours will not benefit you or your children,*" illuminate the overlap between the terms land, life, home and family.

This is, then, a set of relationships between the self, the group and the universe, in which home becomes the common factor and the desired product. Home connected individuals to a group, which in turn connected them to a land, and finally the land connected the group to the universe. What matters here is that through this traditional belief, both the group and the land were understood as divine creations which exerted a powerful effect over the individual's life and provided man with a fixed place, both socially and spatially within the universe.

In examining the Ḥedjāzī house, we find that it was seen as a living element of society; a structure was called after the *mu'allemin*'s name until it was completed, and then it took the name of the owner's family. Houses were called "*young and old*", "*happy and sad*", "*healthy and sick*." The fact that Ḥedjāzī *mu'allemin* named major parts of their houses after parts of the human body testifies to this image. Buildings not only shared the names of men, but building components were also named after parts of the human body (Fig. 7.4.). To most of the *mu'allemin* the house could not have been imagined with a missing part, just as a normal body could not: "*...the house has eyes, ears, arms, legs, bones, ribs, skin, veins, a chest, a heart and a stomach....it has a back and a front, a shoulder and a neck.*"<sup>9</sup>

As discussed in following chapters, the traditional Ḥedjāzī *mu'allemin* were expressing the commonly-felt relationship between the perfection of man's creation and the place that housed it, the functions that both had to perform, and the notion of embodiment and habitation. As a living entity, the house not only provided for basic physical and biological needs, but reflected and nurtured mental, emotional and

---

<sup>9</sup> *Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990. He concluded by saying that the only difference between humans and houses was that the house was more fortunate than humans, for houses could be renovated and could become 'young' again.

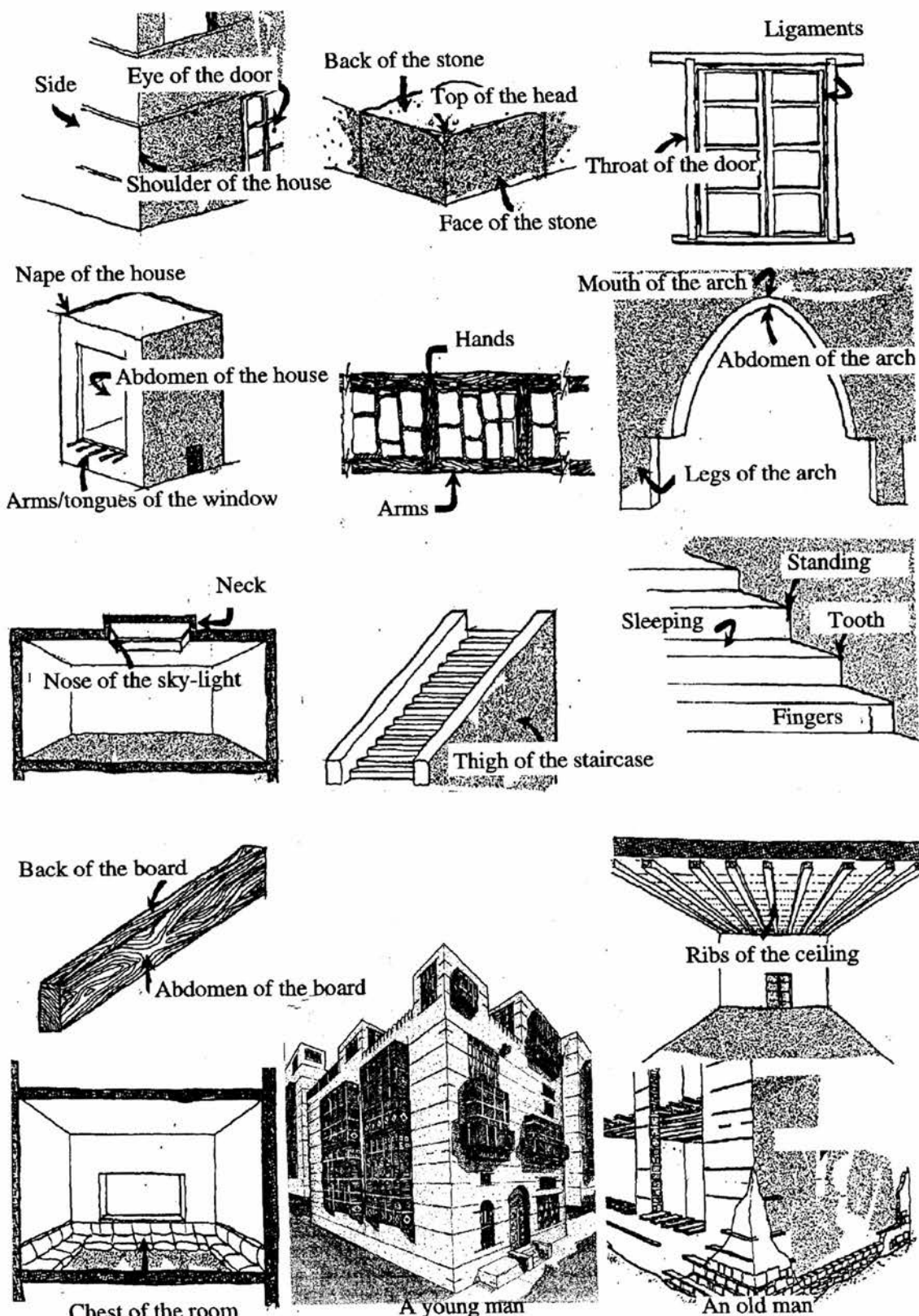


Fig. 7.4. Some building components which shared their names with those of the human body.

spiritual well-being for man, "...besides God's forgiveness and good health, what could you ask of life [the material world] more than that?"<sup>10</sup>.

However, the house did not only resemble the human body in that it was a material envelope of an immaterial spirit; it also had an important role to play in the process of enhancing the microcosm of man (his body) and creating his microcosm (home). The end product, with its meanings, confirms that the criteria used by the *mu'allemin* shaped the house as something much more than just a shelter. The identity of this house implied a strong bonding between building, man and place: a mutual identification between the dweller and the dwelling.

We shall now look briefly at the traditional Ḥedjāzī house from the perspective of its builders and of the society that produced it. We will then study the house as a physical representation of man, and finally we will look at the house as a symbolic representation of both man and the universe.

As noted earlier, establishing an appropriate place in the universe required the involvement of the whole group to achieve the initial links with the land. By simply abiding by the socially-accepted norms, values and rules of behaviour of the group, the owner of a house still to be built guaranteed himself initial acceptability in the community. To prove his attitudes towards the common beliefs of the community, he had to reflect them. Here came the role of the house as the mirror of the individual's intentions and actions. A man would try to build his home to be as close as possible to the prevailing ideas of the time. The *mu'allemin's* role - as a member of that community - consequently became that of both a civil servant and a supervisor. He would guarantee the client a structurally-sound house and would see to the application of all building rituals necessary for the initiation and establishment of his client's place in the world.

Families were physically and emotionally involved in the production of a house in traditional Ḥedjāz. The idea of building a house would stem from a family's need for more space, or from a change in the family's income. In whichever case, the initiation of the scheme required a family gathering and perhaps a kind of clan fund-raising to cover the allocated budget for the house. Approaching a *mu'allemin*

---

<sup>10</sup> *Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 16, 1990.



required a gathering of *ḥāra* members to advise the owner on the 'best man for the job.' *Ṣalāt 'istikhārah* (a prayer to ask God's guidance) was maintained for a day or a number of days before the client approached the selected *mu'allem*. The initiation of the idea of building a new house was marked by a dinner gathering for family and neighbours in celebration and to ask for their support (in terms of their understanding in the matter of the annoyance that the constructions work was going to cause them for a number of years).

The construction process began with 'presenting the house to God' through the common Muslim Ḥedjāzī practice of sacrifice. A sheep was slaughtered on the building-site as an offering by the owner in thanks to God. The meat of the animal was distributed to the poor of the town in appreciation and sharing of God's gifts. The role of this ritual was both to ward off the present forces of evil (e.g., evil eye)<sup>11</sup> and to evoke the presence and protection of God. The process of sanctifying a building's foundations was also believed to serve many purposes. It ensured the stability of the building, it protected the construction workers against injury, and it invoked Divine help for the owner in completing this vital undertaking. In some cases, the recitation of Qur'ānic verses on the location of the prospective house was another means of asking God to witness this event in the owner's life.

During the construction of the house, similar rituals took place with the completion of each floor. The most important ritual then, would be the demarcation of the threshold and front door - which is discussed later in the chapter. When the first course of stones was laid, an amount of five riyals was buried under the threshold to make it '*tabah mabrūkah* (a blessed-entrance)<sup>12</sup>. In Al-Madinah, the same procedure was followed, except that besides the sums of money, *ḥizmat na'na'* (a sheaf of mint) was buried under the first step of the entrance in the hopes of making it a green

---

<sup>11</sup> Precautions against the evil eye were taken throughout the construction process to provide assurance that the construction would be completed with no complications and that the building would stand and serve for many generations.

<sup>12</sup> This amount of money was given to the *mu'allem* by the client so as to bury it during the construction of the '*atabah*. However, it was conveyed many times by former clients that most *mu'allemīn* did not follow the client's wishes by burying the money until it became the norm in Ḥedjāz that the ritual of the purification or sanctification of the threshold would be complete once the money was given to the *mu'allem* to do so, even if he was not going to bury it.



(prosperous) house<sup>13</sup>. These beliefs and habits did vary from time to time and from family to family. For example, the owner might invite a chanter of the Qur'ān to recite a few chapters from the Holy Qur'ān on the intended plot of land in order to guard the future home from evil eyes and to beseech God's protection of the house from the devil from the first day on. This was as known as *lilat ḡiker; diker; qirāiyah* (a night of remembrance, recitation, invocation of God's)<sup>14</sup>. This practice was also carried out before the family move to the new house to make it 'safe' from evil presence. This stage marked the initial establishment of the owner's territory on the land and the beginning of establishing his place in the universe.

As soon as the house was completed, no one but the owner was allowed beyond the reception areas of the house. The rest of the house was rendered 'invisible' to outsiders<sup>15</sup>. This stage was the first indication of the transformation of the house from a solid structure to a personal realm. Only the owner would decide who could "enter his life" and what degree of intimacy would it fall in. The submission of the house to the owner was marked a ceremonial dinner 'azīmah held at the owner's new house. The guests included the 'omdah of the ḡāra, prominent residents and neighbours, the mu'allem and the senior members of his team (e.g., garārī). The main purpose of this procedure was the establishment of the rites of passage or transitions of ownership of the house from the moral ownership of the mu'allem to the legal possessions of the occupying family. As we see in chapter six, the ceremony also represented a declaration of the privacy of the house. The guests were not shown around the house, even if no female family members were present. The building became bait (home) as soon as the owner of the house finally received it and his

---

<sup>13</sup> Both the sheaf of mint (and its green colour) and the shining silver had special connotation in traditional Ḥedjāz. The green colour being the symbol of peace and prosperity, the fresh scent of a sheaf of mint - brought from Al-Madinah - symbolized the virtuous reputation of the owner, while the silver coin (and the number five) symbolized prosperity protected from the evil eye. It was also the norm among the rich merchants to bring special heavy polished-stones and marble-blocks from India especially for the threshold construction.

<sup>14</sup> This not similar to the ḡūfī's ḡhikr, which is a spiritual method of concentration and recitation of special sacred formulas.

<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting here that the penetration of non-family members into the private realms of the house was considered as "the penetration of a foreign body into one's eye, it puts the eyes at risk immediately that it should be removed promptly." Such risk stemmed from the belief that the family's symbolic terrain would be in jeopardy. This harm would dramatically multiply if the family had already used the house, it was then considered as "sleeping in some else's bed without his permission."

family name became associated with the structure. Then, the upper-floors were considered as the *ḥaram* (the most private quarters) which were restricted to the men of the house and to the female members of the family. It was considered critically improper for other men to enter these areas. The norm was that the closer one was to the family occupying the house, the deeper and the higher one was allowed inside it. This associative act revealed a process by which the conceptual was translated into the actual and then experienced as reality. The spatial position of man on earth was then established.

Furnishing the house was also an occasion of communal celebration within the one *ḥāra* as well as other adjacent communities. For example, if the house was to be occupied by a newly-married couple, the household gear would be carried from the family house of the bride to the new one in a public parade that could cover one or two *ḥārāt*. In this, members of both the bride's *ḥāra* and that of the bridegroom would contribute to the moving process. Neighbours can then observe what the couple have and what they might need for the completion of the furnishing of their house. This could then be gifted to them in the following days of the marriage ceremony.

Once occupied, the house became the setting for many religious and socio-cultural rituals, and hence the establishment of a spiritual domain for the family<sup>16</sup>. The whole house was a potential praying area for the family, while the reception areas were used by relatives and guests. There are some Hedjāzī houses that had a *mūṣallā* (a spacial place for communal prayer) in which some neighbours gathered during prayer times. The establishment of a *mūṣallā* in the house introduced a further layer of sanctity in it. The house, as a primary domain for individual, family and group worship, was thus linked with the religious life of the larger community<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, the house was associated with all local socio-cultural festivities and was 'dressed-up' and adorned with the appropriate ornamentations of each occasion.

---

<sup>16</sup> Cyclical events like the five daily prayers and family gathering on meals were considered as minor daily rituals that varied in their duration and interval length and which also involved certain places in the house, time, objects and people.

<sup>17</sup> Some of the richer houses would establish a weekly religious-gathering in their house. These *madjālis* involved the presence of learned men and religious leader as well as large groups of the *ḥāra* residence.

The principal location of the rooms of the house had a special connotation. The proverb "*aim for the chest, even if you were penniless*" means that if one is invited to a house, one should position oneself in the focal position to gain the respect of others. This shows how Ḥedjāzīes traditionally reserved a high esteem for such locations. Only senior members of the household and special guests occupied such highly-honoured locations. We should note that this is a conceptual and not a physical place, and that a single room could have more than one such place depending on the time of day. For example, *al-merkāz* (a high sitting-platform) would be the focus of the reception area in the morning, while *jalsat al-rowshān* (the sitting area in the bay-window) would be the focus of that same room in the afternoon; and so forth.

Ḥedjāzīes traditionally recognise three main divisions in the human body and in the house (Fig. 7.5.), these are: the head, body and legs on the one hand; and family quarters, living areas and reception areas on the other. The head of the human body is considered to be the highest part, 'high' meaning that most of the senses (seeing, hearing, tasting and smelling) are centralised in it. From the spiritual point of view it is considered as the sacred part of the body since God tells us in the Qur'ān that every human being who comprehends (*ya'qil*) is held responsible for his acts<sup>18</sup>. Correspondingly, the top section of the Ḥedjāzī house accommodated the living quarters of the head of the family and other senior members. It should be noted that, in traditional Ḥedjāzī society, the head of the family was considered to be supreme in authority, decision making and 'reverence.'

The middle part of the human being which comprises most of the specialised organs is accommodated in what we will term 'the body.' Some of these organs can be removed from the body without substantial damage, while others remain vital for its existence (e.g., the heart). Although the heart is not responsible for any emotional and spiritual feelings, the Ḥedjāzīes traditionally believed it had. In the Ḥedjāzī house, the living quarters were accommodated in this middle section<sup>19</sup>, because this was where the whole family lived together throughout their lives. This is the reason why

---

<sup>18</sup> That is to say that those who reach maturity and for some reason or other are insane are promised paradise and exempted from judgement on the Last Day. There are also numerous verses in the Qur'ān (e.g., *Sūra V: 58, Mā'idah*) which refer to the signs of God that are given to mankind to seek the Truth and will not be seen except by those who comprehend (*ya'qilūn*).

<sup>19</sup> The Ḥedjāzīes call the central part of the house *waṣṭ al-bait* (the waist of the house).

we find no houses without a heart (i.e., the main *madjlis* or family living-room) while they could have one, two or three *maqā'id*.

The lowest part of the body, the legs, which was responsible only for mobility, was much more essential to Ḥedjāzīes formerly than today, for then the life of a person depended on his ability to walk. His social activities, his work and consequently his image was vital to his survival. Likewise, a Ḥedjāzī house without a reception area was inconceivable; this lower part of the house was its extension towards society at large, and this was where the status of the family was put to the test: their hospitality, largesse and justice.

As we see earlier, in the traditional Ḥedjāz 'centres' were shifted from one hour of the day to another in different parts of one room and within the one house. Likewise, Ḥedjāzīes believed that a man's behaviour would change according to need. Thus *mu'allem* Ṣaḍaḡah Karkāchin referred to the different postures that one adopts in certain circumstances, for example, the sudden reflex of movement to a more respectful posture when a senior member of the family enters a room.

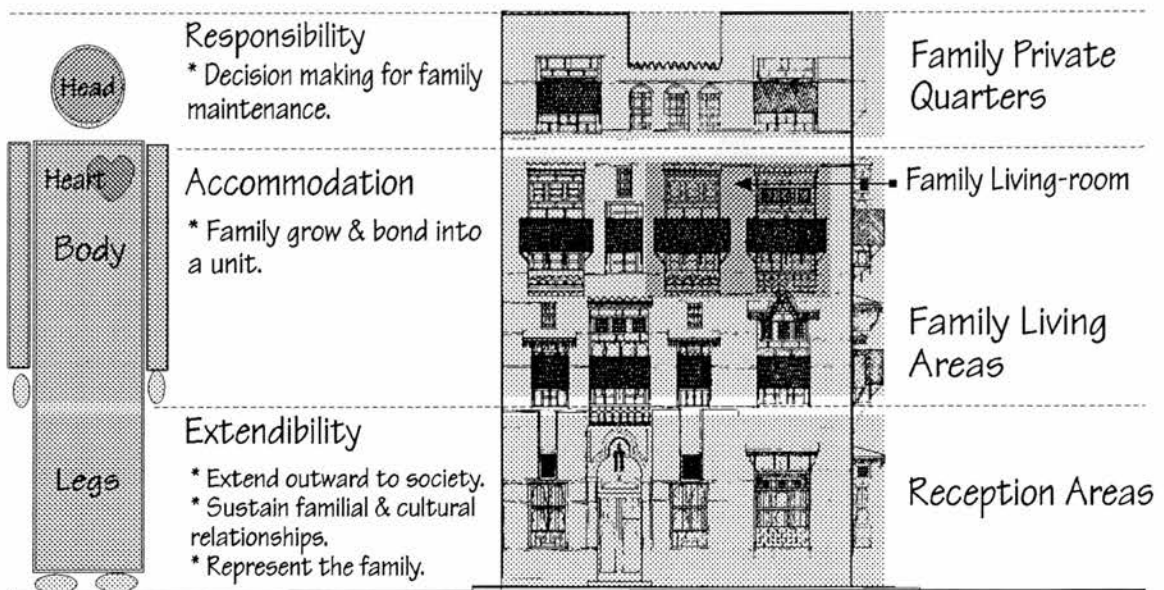


Fig. 7.5: The traditional Ḥedjāzī house as a representation of the human body.

### 7.1.3. The traditional Ḥedjāzī's perception of house and the universe

The first House appointed for men was that at Bakkah: full of blessings and guidance for all kinds of beings. (*Sūra* III: 96, *Āl- 'Ūmrān*).

The significance of homes from the traditional Ḥedjāzī perspective led society to accept several interpretations of a number of Qur'ānic verses to reinforce further the value of home. For example, the verse quoted above is believed to refer to the Mosque at Makkah. The local Ḥedjāzī belief is that when God decided to send a vicegerent to earth, He first provided him with a house. Another version of this story relates that when Adam sinned and was sent to earth, he was first provided with a house on the spot of 'Arafāt, a mountain near Makkah. But while these stories were narrated as folk-tales - along with Qur'ānic verses - they had the power of religious teachings in terms of their credibility and the effect they exerted on informants.

In any event, Ḥedjāzīs traditionally took the above verse a little further by regarding it as a declaration from God that if man were to dwell on earth from now on, he should first have a home to protect him and provide him with stability<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, this house should be blessed, for it would be the place where God's commands would be observed. Several similar interpretations were derived from the Qur'ān to indicate that dwellings are provided by God in the sense that the Almighty provides man with the building materials (from the sacred universe) and with the knowledge to establish homes, which He will then bless and protect<sup>21</sup>.

Different verses from the Qur'ān were always recited by my informants to support one argument or another. Some of these verses were far removed from the topic discussed at the time, but nevertheless showed the significance of religious belief in society. For example, the following verse was recited to me as a proof that the house as an 'earthly abode' should be a way for man to reach his heavenly home:

Which is then best? - he that layeth his foundations on piety to God and His Pleasure? - or he that layeth his foundation on an undermined sand-cliff ready to crumble to pieces? And it doth crumble to pieces with him, into the fire of Hell. And God guideth not people that do wrong. (*Qur'ān, Sūra IX: 109, Taubah*).

My informant went on to assure me that in the Qur'ān, man was not asked to build houses, but was promised a house in Paradise if his earthly home was a house of worship and good deeds. It should be a place for religious observance expressed

---

<sup>20</sup> Interpretation by a member of Al-Makkī family. Makkah, May 16, 1990.

<sup>21</sup> For example the word *baiyyat* from the Qur'ān, which means 'to meditate' is derived from the same Arabic root as the word *bait* and *bāt*, meaning a dwelling, to pray at night or to spend the night.



by rituals, prayers and activities. These in turn would bond the dweller and the dwelling to God, and the group to the land.

The moral of this example is that this human product of culture became an object of sanctity, as divine as a God-given creation. The Qur'ān says: "*It is God who made your habitations homes of rest and quiet for you;...*" (Sūra XVI: 80-81, *Naḥil*), and "*and among his signs is this, He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts)...*" (Sūra XXX: 21-22, *Rūm*). The Hierarchy of sanctity in the universe, as revealed by God in the Qur'ān, had its effect on traditional Ḥedjāzīes. The place where they worshipped God became the most sacred of places. The place where they lived and worshipped was also sanctified, with its own hierarchy of sanctity, as seen earlier. When these Ḥedjāzīes differentiated between places it was a distinction of degree and not of kind.

Distinctions of sanctity were first learnt from the Qur'ān; and the description of what made places sacred was also learnt, transmitted, culturally interpreted, and later assimilated through their buildings. For instance, the *ḥaram* or inviolable zone which was first known in prehistoric Arabia to distinguish Makkah from other places became the term used to distinguish the most private quarters of the family in the Ḥedjāzī house<sup>22</sup>. Likewise, the whole earth is not uniformly sacred and neither is the house.

#### **7.1.4. Other socio-cultural aspects associated with the house**

I would like to return to the issue of socio-cultural beliefs to further elaborate their role in the shape of the built environment and the behaviours of traditional Ḥedjāzīes, especially when it comes to the threshold of the house and its importance as a symbol of the entrance, gate, boundary and as a physical transitional mark.

In general, and as we saw earlier, the traditional Ḥedjāzīes believed in *fā'l* (omen), *'in al-ḥassūd* (the evil eyes of a covetous person), as well as in *jinn* or *afārīt* (ghosts, spirits), among others things, as much as they believed in other religious matters. The extent of these beliefs determined a great number of protective acts and

---

<sup>22</sup> This is different from the term *ḥarīm* which means 'women of the house.'



object like the hanging of a *ḥedjāb*<sup>23</sup> (amulet) or the saying of protective words like *māshā' Allāh, lā qūata illā billāh*<sup>24</sup> (God's will be done, there is no power but with God). These fears are at their most when it comes to the family house with a number of children playing around, happy marriages and aged living parents and grandparents. Those who are expected to be the most envious are the family members and relatives themselves, therefore, they are expected to spill out the words *māshā' Allāh* immediately upon entering the house (at the threshold) or upon seeing children or objects that they like, so as to ward off any charge of being envious. Guests and visitors come second as potential desirous or jealous people<sup>25</sup>. Once again, the threshold tends to be the place where any jealous spells (or healthy blessings) could take place (where household objects or family relations could become observable).

The importance given to the threshold stemmed from its role as a division in the homogeneous space, establishing an outside and inside, installing a difference. Because it was a mere symbolic boundary of transitions, accessibility and visibility between two domains, it had to be more dependent on social rules and cultural conventions than the *dihlīz* (lobby), for example, which was enclosed by physical barriers. The burial of a silver coin or a sheaf mint under the threshold, although involving an element of fiction, was a conscious indication of the significance given to the act of passing through the threshold of the house. Through the door, and on this threshold, people moved from one world to another, from public to private, and from everybody's world to this individual family's world. This threshold marks and installs two distinctive places (i.e., outside-inside), that required the invocation of a strict ancient Arabian ritual of territory, property line and an inviolable domain demarcation. This also involved proper dues of receiving, salutation and respect as appropriate to the culturally-accepted norms and patterns of behaviour required within these different places.

---

<sup>23</sup> These are written charms to counteract or preserve from enchantment. They were also written verses from the Qur'ān.

<sup>24</sup> This is part of a Qur'ānic verse: "Why didst thou not, as thou wentest into thy garden, say: 'God's Will (be done)! There is no power but with God! It shall not see me less than thee in wealth and sons.'" (*Sūra XVIII: Kahf*, Verse 39). These are words that point to the proper way of perceiving or enjoying God's gifts with gratitude rather than with arrogance or *ḥasad* (jealousy or envy).

<sup>25</sup> It is worth mentioning here that this was neither a general Ḥedjāzī attitude, nor was it a social norm that the *mu'allemin* and other informants confirmed.

*Al-‘atabah* (*n.sing.* ‘atabāt = thresholds) is the first step people make towards the house and the last thing they pass when leaving. A ‘green’<sup>26</sup> threshold would then be effective to prevent the evil eye and the visitor’s evil recollections of what he saw inside the house, whether he liked or not. The following is a list of opinions concerning the importance of having a ‘green’ (protected or prosperous) threshold as suggested by my informants:

- 1- A green threshold was a symbol of a firm and upstanding house;
- 2- A place where children are born;
- 3- A place where the owners would remain in good health;
- 4- A place where sons would marry and daughters would be given in marriage;
- 5- To keep all evil people and evil eyes away from the house;
- 6- A place that is peaceful and where a troubles-free family would inhabit.

As a guest in a Ḥedjāzī house, it is a compliment to say to the owner: "*Allāh yedj‘alhā ‘atabah khaḍrā’ or mabrūkah*," (may God make it a green or blessed threshold), "*bismi Allāh al-Rḥmān al-Raḥīm*" (in the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful), or "*‘āmir inshā’llāh*" (may it be wealthy and prosperous in God’s will)<sup>27</sup>. The threshold here is used as a reference to the whole house, with emphasis on the significance of the threshold as it would include the above list of connotations. The Muslims’ custom of respect and religious belief of entering the mosque with one’s right foot and leave with one’s left foot was extended to the threshold of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house. This was considered as a matter of respect and a demonstration of the visitors’ good will<sup>28</sup>.

In general, the rituals associated with the construction of a house, or reception of guests in a completed one seem to be supported by religious and other mythical cultural beliefs. The Ḥedjāzī believed that spirits - whether of past owners, ancestors

---

<sup>26</sup> The term ‘green’ threshold was only symbolic and was rarely manifested on the threshold. Hardly any threshold in Ḥedjāzī houses were painted green, instead the colour was applied to doors, door lintels or free-standing arches marking house entrances.

<sup>27</sup> Such is still the case today, especially upon visiting the houses of elderly families where such rituals should be strictly observed. Failing to do so, however, would be considered by such families as an offense.

<sup>28</sup> Again, this Ḥedjāzī custom is still observed today. Inhabitants of the house enter with their right foot first, and leave with their left. Visitors, out of respect, are expected to do the same.

or otherwise - are future members of the household<sup>29</sup>. This belief was found to be the strongest in Al-Madinah and is treated as a matter of fact, while in Jeddah and Makkah the reputation of a *maskūn* house (inhabited by spirits) was a negative one. However, throughout Ḥedjāz, these spirits were addressed as *sukkān* (dwellers, which is the same word for inhabitants of a house).

Similar to the Islamic belief to greet the 'angel' occupants of the house upon entering the place (even if the house was empty), it was gathered throughout the interviews with the elderly of Ḥedjāz that a desirable tendency was to have socio-cultural non-religious beliefs correspond with other religious rituals. For example, it was a desirable notion to enter the house for the first time (after its completion) on a Friday after the congregational prayer when one's soul and body have just been purified from earthly matters.

Each completed floor of the house was marked with appropriate celebration and festivity - as we see earlier - and poor people followed the progress of development since they gained socially and materially from such occasions. Some of them waited for the completion of certain houses to hold their own celebrations and gatherings as if these houses were their own. Although this meant a gift of food or money, the recognition of the home-owners of these people in their days of prosperity, and the habit of sharing this prosperity and happiness with others led to the development of friendships between members of the community at different levels of income. Almost everybody in the town knew who was building a house, what floor was being constructed and when it was going to be completed.

As we see in chapter six, the process of installing the *rawāshīn* promulgated the beginning of the accommodation process of the house. This was a time of particular celebration for it was the first indication of the fortuitous day when the client is going to receive his house. In fact the commencement of the *rawāshīn* installation was a declaration of the completion of the house. The presentation of the house to the owner was a happy occasion for the neighbourhood. After a long time - ranging from one to four years - it was finally time to receive the family home.

---

<sup>29</sup> The presence of virtuous or evil *Jinn* (spirits) is a Qur'ānic fact, in which they are addressed in many verses after humans as in the verse: "O ye assembly of Jinn and men! came there not unto you apostles from amongst you, setting forth unto you my signs, and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?...." (*Sūra* VI: 130, *Al-An 'ām*).

As we see in chapter six, it was very important for both the client and the *mu'alleem* to have the house finished before the beginning of the Ḥadj season or other major local or religious festivity like *'īd al-fiṭir* (three to six festive breakfasting days after the fasting month of Ramaḍān). This means that the owner could receive a large number of expected guests during these special periods, and the possibility of renting the house to expected pilgrims for a good sum of money that would compensate for the cost of the building. For the family to move to their new home was also considered as a celebration for the *ḥāra* if synchronized with other happy events like a marriage, the Muslim *'īd* or the Ḥadj season. For the *mu'alleem* and his team, this meant a relief of a major responsibility so that they can perform their Ḥadj duties, join in the festivity of the *'īd*, and the reception of their *odjrah* (earnings) which they can make use of at these particular occasions.

Because of the eagerness of the traditional Ḥedjāzīes to create as perfect surroundings in reality as humanly possible, their norms, mores, beliefs and behavioural patterns - along with some dreams and inspiration - supplied what could be missing in a home environment, and compensated for shortcomings to make a happy ritual out of an important event as inhabiting a new house. The dinner party that was held on the first day of occupancy involved most of the neighbours of the community in which the newly built house was erected<sup>30</sup>. According to my informants, this ritualized home-making party had the following connotation:

- 1- An expression of the owner's happiness which should be shared with relatives, members of the neighbourhood and those of the larger community.
- 2- An occasion of expressing the owner's gratitude to God by sharing God's gifts and feeding the poor of other neighbourhoods.
- 3- An unpretentious custom of gaining the approval of the community - that the house confirmed with the norms, values and habits of the community, or prescribed by the larger Ḥedjāzī society.
- 4- On the one hand it was a confirmation by the owner of being egalitarian, and that the new house is accessible to all. Everybody was welcomed and would be treated as a valued guest...all are equal.

---

<sup>30</sup> It was revealed by *mu'alleem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, that this 'occupational ceremony' use to last for two to three days in the old times (not specified) but was reduced to a one day occasion somewhere in the 18th century. (*Mu'alleem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

- 5- On the other hand it was a means of establishing the owner's new territory inside the neighbourhood. A 'silent' announcement to the community that there now exist the new territory of such and such family.
- 6- Members of prominent families were invited in order to associate their respect with that of the owner. This practice might look apposed to the fourth point discussed above, but both meanings were combined to convey humbleness; although the owner might be well known and well connected with the prominent members of the society, he would not emphasize this in the way he treats his fellow neighbours.
- 7- A symbolic gesture that, since the community is entertained and fed in the house, this home, its residents and the family are linked to the larger society.
- 8- A expression of the owner's appreciation to all those who helped in the production of the house whether directly (money lenders, *mu'allemin* and their apprentices), or indirectly (neighbours who bore the inconvenience caused by construction work).
- 9- Finally, towards the 1960s, such home-making rituals shifted in terms of its meanings and emphasis to include a tour around the house with an oral report of the sums paid for constructing and furnishing the house. It may also witness some sort of entertainment known as *ṭarab* (*lit.* delight; pleasure)

Other rituals involving the house were manifested in such cases as the death of the eldest family member or the leader of the family. In large merchant houses, the room in which the deceased family member lived (mainly his sleeping-quarter) was locked permanently. All his belongings were kept in this room, to which only the elder members of the family were allowed access. While this was not the norm throughout Ḥedjāz, the least manifestation of this ritual was the closure of the room for a number of mournful days (mostly 40 days known as *arba 'iniyyah*) before it was opened again and used by the brother or sister of the deceased or the eldest of his sons. In some cases the closure of the deceased room extended to a year known as *sanawiyyah* (annual mourning). The main reasons of such rituals were not exactly determined, but it was gathered that because of the association of particular places in the house with the sad event of the death of a loved one, no one would want to carry any sort of activities in that place, especially festive ones. In the cases when the room of the deceased was not closed, certain precautions were taken as a matter of respect to him like the prohibition of children play in the room or the arrangement of other activities of festive nature like dinner gatherings and marriage celebrations.



The belongings of the deceased were kept as inheritance, to be passed on to his children and grandchildren. In most cases, certain belongings would be distributed amongst senior family members in a gender-linked fashion. For example, young female adults would receive the jewellery and dresses of the deceased mother or grandmother to be used in a specific future event like a wedding, thereby linking the past with the present and future, and reflecting the continuation of the family bonds through the course of time. This notion was stronger with the male member of the family who will receive clothing items of the deceased father or grandfathers. It had the connotation of the transformation of power and authority of the leader of the family to his eldest son who would, not only occupy the quarters of the former leader of the family, but would also wear his turban and carry his stick.

In conclusion, one can see from the rituals and symbolism associated with the house that the Islamic version of creation, the divine order, as culturally interpreted in such a traditional society, inspired and legitimized almost every human act. The traditional Hedjāzī house was a schema of relationships, the aim of which was to bring order, integrity and meaning to one's life in the universe - a series of connections between person, house, time and the whole universe. Through the physical and symbolic reproduction of the sacred within the secular, the universe within the home, people saw the moral order writ large in the world, and they knew it was true because it was objectively represented and prescribed by religion.

Home in this tradition was meant to be an extension of the divine order of things: self, group, land and time. It expressed for society the logical proof of the unity of all things; the link between the people, the objects around them and God. The attempt to convert the home into a kind of sacred place served both to legitimise the group itself and its occupation of the land, for in this way, the town at large and the home within it formed a part of divinely-ordered nature rather than being a merely human creation. Individuals found their rightful place within this well-ordered system.

The Hedjāzī conception of the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm was that man is the image of the universe and vice versa. Both man and the universe were explained reciprocally, one in terms of the other. In traditional Hedjāzī society, this expressed the idea of a supreme unifying order in the universe which is embodied in man. It is this order that the traditional *mu'alle*m has tried to grasp and interpret in his works as discussed in the following chapters.



However, to most families living in traditional fashion in the Ḥedjāz, home in the sense we are talking about here began at the very origin, in 'one's head,' an issue that is discussed in further details in chapter eight. There we see how to be at home with one's beliefs and values, one's familiar experience and bodily routines, is to be at home in one's microcosm (body). That microcosm was in one's head and heart and so was its comfort; it only needed a place to settle in. People's real homes were 'in their heads'; wherever they went, home went with them. This symbolic conception of a built-in home suggests that home was a state of mind before it could be a presence in a particular place. On the other hand it could mean that the establishment of a sound microcosm was a prerequisite of the development of a macrocosm. In this case, the house as a physical structure could not be man's place in the universe until he could assert his inner beliefs and come to terms with his own self, and thus experience a 'real presence' in the universe. Home stood between one's body and the universe, while the house was merely the means by which the positioning of oneself, one's values and beliefs in the universe became possible.

The design and building processes that we discussed in chapter six also provide a clear evidence of the desire for correspondence between man, universe and building, each of them a 'dwelling' in the true sense. This central idea was constantly reinforced by rituals, language and by the building itself. Various forms and metaphors were employed which served as devices to remind one of the primordial event from which all order was generated.

The question is, were these inner-meanings of the home clear to both the house owner and the *mu'alle*m? If this were the case, to what degree did these inner meanings effect the perception of home in society at large? And finally, how did the *mu'alle*m as a member of the community transmit them to his clients if they were ignorant about them? While the interviews with a number traditional families, clients and builders - discussed in chapter four - shed some light on some of these inquiries, as seen in the following chapters, they did not provide wholly satisfactory answers to these questions.

On the one hand one can think of these symbols and rituals as an extension on the community level of the rituals of home. Most of them were fictions devised by this traditional society through the course of time to make its dwelling more of a blessed home. Whether these fictions or rituals reflect the truth is beyond question, but

the fact that they were believed and acted upon make them factual. Ancestral legends which became favourable by time, once again, merged with religious ideals and became inseparable. The favourite legends became associated with affections and were considered as a pleasant thing to do. In short, these rituals were a group activities which ensured that members of the community are participating in a highly-charged individual state and group atmosphere which left no participant untouched by the depth of social and ideological meaning and emotions aroused.

On the other hand, one feels inclined to believe that no amount of knowledge about the inner meanings embodied in these traditional houses would have changed the prevailing attitudes of society towards the home. People 'lived' these meanings; they led their lives in accordance to them even if perhaps they did not understand them completely. Houses were sanctified. The reasons for this sanctity might indeed have enhanced<sup>31</sup> the perception of home, but it would not have altered it to any significant degree.

It seems likely that, in the end, clients came to recognize many of these inner meanings. Some clients, for example, asked the *mu'allemin* to install certain motifs and symbols in different parts of the house, or to initiate a certain ritual at some point of the construction process, because these would carry certain meanings that they wanted to convey. Some of these notions were not accepted by the community at the beginning but were later absorbed and repeated in several other houses. An example of this would be the writing of Qur'ānic verses on the walls of certain rooms modelled after mosque inscriptions, the planting of a palm tree in the courtyard (a symbol of paradise) and so on. Today, the power of such meanings has decayed, and the symbols of that power have decayed as well, a situation which is discussed in more details in chapters eleven and twelve.

---

<sup>31</sup> Rare were the cases when the inner meaning of a certain aspect of home ruined its perception instead of enhancing it. However I was told an anecdote about a conflict of meanings between a client and an inexperienced young *mu'allemin* from Al-Madinah concerning the opening of a courtyard in a house. The *mu'allemin* suggested to the client that, besides the breeze that the courtyard would bring to the house, the client could also "see the Face of God all day." The client, attached as he was to the traditional 'school of thought,' insisted that "God's Face, God willing, will be all over the house, for the Face of God did not need an opening to be seen." Accordingly, the client rejected the idea even if it would have brought his children "all the entertainment." *Mu'allemin* Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rifī. Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990.

## 7.2. Privacy in the traditional Ḥedjāzī house

Here, I will try to reinforce my argument that the traditional Ḥedjāzī domestic architecture had a 'culture' of its own, a particular set of pragmatic meanings, and that it was one that encoded cultural and social rules and conventions. This traditional house contained the most powerful and ramifying cultural codes. Its appearance and content were always highly constrained by community ritual acts, the most lasting of which were the maintenance of the house 'purity' through the protection against intruding presence (of individuals and their olfactory senses) and other forms of unwanted social contacts.

Amongst the major roles played by the actions and rituals in traditional Ḥedjāz was to provide definitive temporal boundaries and demarcations to the different life stages of the house and its inhabitants; they aimed at the appropriation of the home environment to suit the lives of the residents. Although this may sound similar to the reasons for the dwelling-community dialectic of territoriality discussed earlier, in fact both the means and extent were different. The latter strive to establish the family space as differentiated from the community spaces, the former aims at purifying the specific family space itself<sup>32</sup>.

One function of the design of a house is to distinguish between public and private domains as Lawrence puts it<sup>33</sup>. The relationship between these domains expresses the administrative, cultural, judicial and socio-political rights of the inhabitants, neighbours, visitors and strangers. We have seen earlier how boundaries, thresholds and transitional zones were assigned certain socio-cultural values that communicated meanings, the aim of which is to evoke proper behaviour, therefore minimizing disturbance to the lifestyles of community members, hence, social conflicts.

---

<sup>32</sup> Naturally, the traditional Ḥedjāzī house exemplified primary territories, which were further subdivided within the house itself as discussed here. However, the notion of privacy maintenance was considered as a regulatory mechanism while the notion of controlling access to the house was considered as a mean of maintaining property-lines. Both notions were so clear and obvious to everyone that they were regionally acknowledged and accepted in Ḥedjāz, which made them function as a major stabilizing force in the society by regulating and providing cues for accepted social behaviour.

<sup>33</sup> See Lawrence, Roderick J. "Translating Anthropological Concepts Into Architectural Practice." In *Housing, Culture and Design: A comparative Perspective*. Edited by Setha Law and Erve Chambers. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989. 90.

The basic means of minimizing social conflicts from the traditional Arabian and later Islamic perception, meant that the greater part of the enclosed area of the house, like that of the tents of the Arabian nomads, should comprise of separate apartments for each gender. A subtle progression from one domain to the other, and from the outside to the inside became an essential requirement<sup>34</sup>. Access to most Arabian and Muslim houses takes place through carefully-positioned entrances (male and female visitors), along a buffer area in the form of an antechamber, a corridor or passageway. To emphasize the importance of the transition from one domain to the other, these various thresholds (main entrance, corridor, antechamber, reception room) are usually embellished with one sort of decoration or another (carvings, gypsum work, Qur'ānic inscriptions) appropriate to its use or the attributes of the owner.

Coming to the maintenance of privacy in traditional Ḥedjāz, we find that it was, and still is, mainly directed towards the insulation of the whole household from outside, non-kin visual exposure. The visual protection of the house-interior is another vital requirement of the Ḥedjāzī house, especially when the inner family-apartments are considered. Given the compact and continuous layout of buildings and the very dense nature of Ḥedjāzī cities, rooms of the ground floor were raised above the eye-level. Windows in these rooms, although much larger than those of other floors, were shuttered and protected with ironwork and latticed with wooden-screens. The same applies to the rest of the house - except for the ironwork.

Different places within the 'home range'<sup>35</sup> meant different types of territories, each with its specific behavioural regulators, sign systems and cultural cues. The distinction among these places were based on the degree of control, use, duration of spatial claims and the amount of cultural sign systems necessary to maintain a culturally-accepted behaviour. These were mainly non-verbal sign systems like *ḥārawīyyah*, verbal sign systems like the use of *ṭarīq*, physical factors like the positioning of private spaces, or cultural and social customs and conventions like giving one's back to the door. All these are discussed later in this chapter.

---

<sup>34</sup> Such an arrangement was not only typical to the Ḥedjāz, but also to almost every traditional Arab and Muslim house in the world.

<sup>35</sup> The term 'home-range' is used in this research to refer to the areas around the traditional house in which my informants felt 'at home.' This may include the lane, *ḥāra*, market place, mosque, work place, and as far as city gates. This is discussed in more detail in chapter eight.

But besides such social means of maintaining privacy, there existed other means that did not necessarily require the construction of barriers like walls and antechambers. The following discussion gives some examples of the social and physical means of maintaining privacy<sup>36</sup> inside and outside the house. Figure (7.6.) shows the traditional Hedjāzī perception of these two domains.

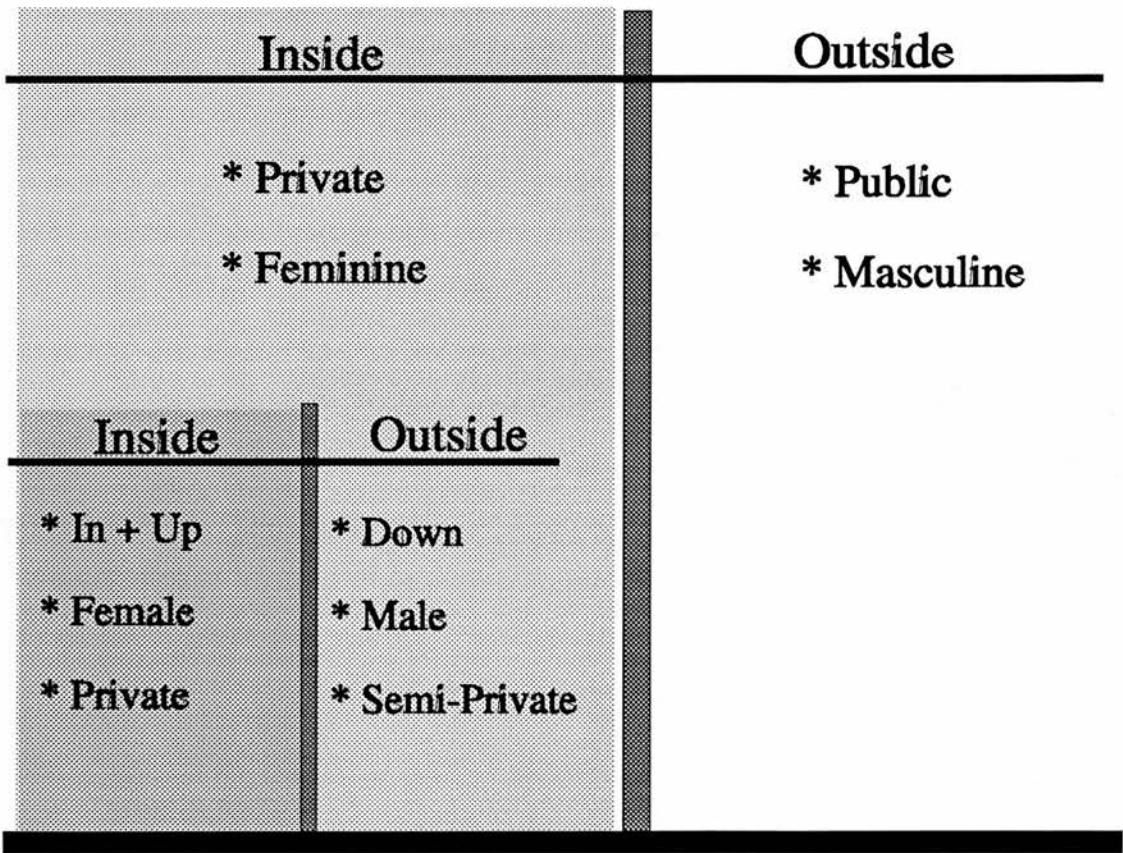


Fig. 7.6. Inside-outside relationship.

Figure (7.7.) demonstrates how physical and social codes operated in traditional Hedjāz to demarcate territories, to provide social cue for proper behaviour and to control contact with others. In between the major boundaries, filters and territories, there existed another hierarchy of minor regulators, most of which were socio-cultural ones, such as the group membership filter that controls the entrance of non-*ḥāra*

<sup>36</sup> There were a multiple local equivalent for 'privacy' in the vocabulary of traditional Hedjāz: for example: '*ar*', '*irḡ*', '*ḥaram*', and many others which were not necessarily translated to mean 'privacy' in English, but were used in similar contexts. For instance the phrase: *iḥfad 'ārakk* (meaning to defend or protect one's private things or honour like the female of the house) is used in similar contexts as 'maintain your privacy' in English.



residents. Note that the hierarchy of these filters and the role played by each one determined its importance to the family of the house, hence the degree of elaboration and the socio-cultural values assigned to it. As we see earlier for example, the entrance-hall (*dihlīz*) was the most important of territory demarcations and therefore had the highest social values. Because it was intended to regulate access of people and objects between the private and public domains, and was required to control visibility between the exterior and interior of the house, it was saturated with all kind of symbols, social and physical cues. While the entrance-hall was a spatial demarcation of the beginning of a more private zone, it was not considered public or private.

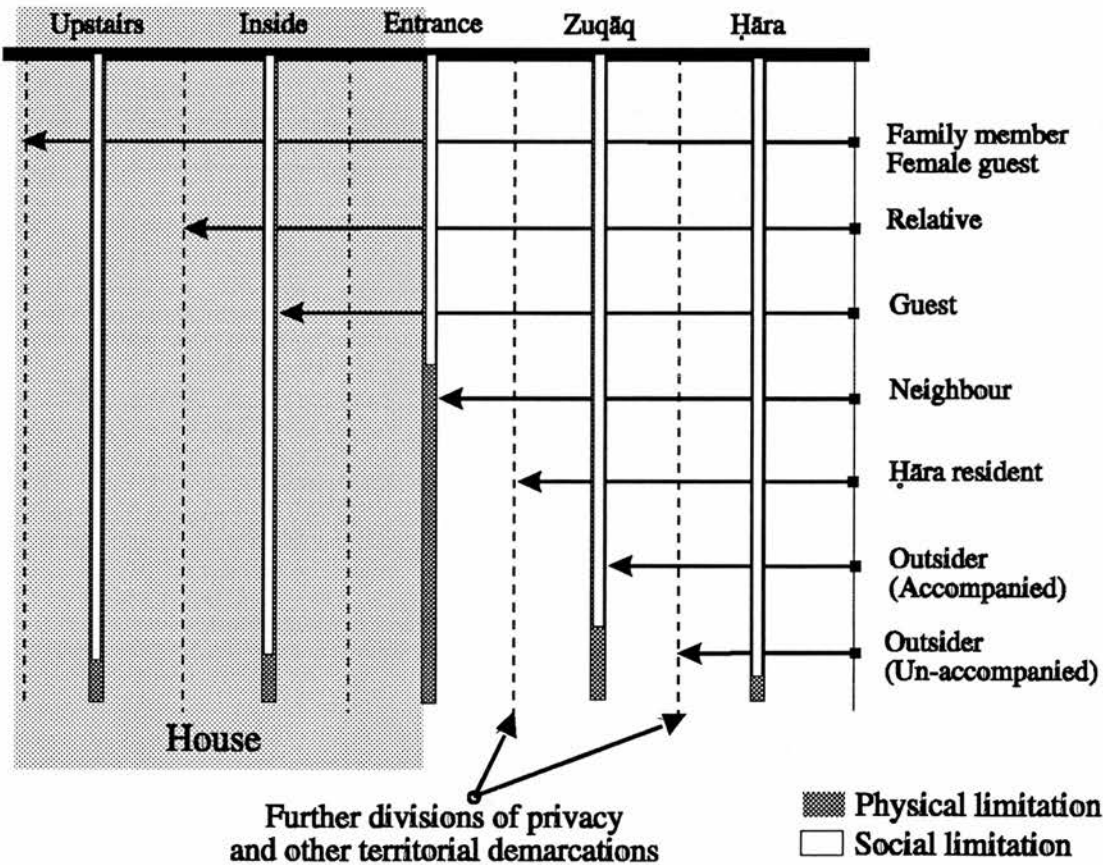


Fig. 7.7. Physical and social means of maintaining privacy and regulating social contacts.

Territory indicators inside the house were ‘softer’ than those within public or semi-public areas which tend to be more physical than socio-cultural. The hierarchy of the right of passage as seen in Figure (7.7.), illustrates the number of ‘filters’ that people, seeking admission to a house, had to go through. The means of passing



through any of these filters were determined by the status of the individual approaching the house (stranger, relative, friend). Also note that even after passing through the last filter (the threshold), where the visitor was physically inside the house, he was not considered fully admitted until the host decided the final stage where the visitor was to rest. The rituals associated with each stage of transition communicated to the visitor which filter he was passing through<sup>37</sup>.

### 7.2.1. Physical controls

Historically speaking, the division of the Arabian tent into three socially and physically defined zones reflected the emergence of a widely accepted home-privacy system that is still usable until today. However, the traditional house - as we see in chapter three - was divided into three main parts. The lower floors (ground and first) were reserved for service<sup>38</sup> and reception areas (*madjālis*, *maqā'id*), the middle floors (second and third) included the family living and relative-reception areas (*mū'akhhār*, *maqā'id* and *suffah*), and the upper floors accommodated the family sleeping quarters (*khilwāt*, *mabāyyit*) and terraces (*khārdjāt*). The main rooms of the house (i.e., *maqā'id* and *madjālis*) had large bay-windows (*mashrābīyyāt*) with latticed wooden-screens that allowed one-way vision from the inside to the outside. These window areas - which were the main architectural characteristic of the Ḥedjāzī house - were used for sitting and sleeping, depending on the time of the day.

Each of these parts had its own restricted function. Strict socio-cultural codes and rules of proper behaviour were to be observed by all members of the household, relatives and visitors regarding who went where, when and with whom. Privacy in the house was well defined - as discussed later in the chapter. The hierarchy operated in ascending order. The ground floor was the semi-public domain, the first and second floors were the semi-private domain, and the upper floors and inner rooms were designated the *ḥaram* or inviolable-zone because they were the most private parts of

---

<sup>37</sup> For example, coughing or making similar sounds would indicate to the visitor that the owner of the house is alarming the female members of the household that he is admitting a male guest and that they have to evacuate the reception room.

<sup>38</sup> This included the entrance-hall (*dihlīz*), the staircase (*daradj*), storage-room (*digaisī*), and water-closets (*merḥāq* or *ṭahārah*).

the house. As seen earlier, the traditional Ḥedjāzī socio-cultural connotation of the sanctity of each part of the house was determined according to these vertical and horizontal hierarchies.

The general custom of Ḥedjāz dictates that a male visitor's accessibility to any of these zones is mainly determined by his status with regard to the host family. Accessibility within a certain zone is controlled by a further division of sub-zones restricting the visitor's accessibility into deeper sections of each zone (inner rooms). Generally, the closer the visitor is to the family the higher and deeper he can go inside the house. **Height** and **depth** (Fig.7.8.) are the major criteria of privacy in the house, although female visitors tend to enjoy a much higher and deeper accessibility inside the Ḥedjāzī house than male visitors, regardless of their relationship to the host family.

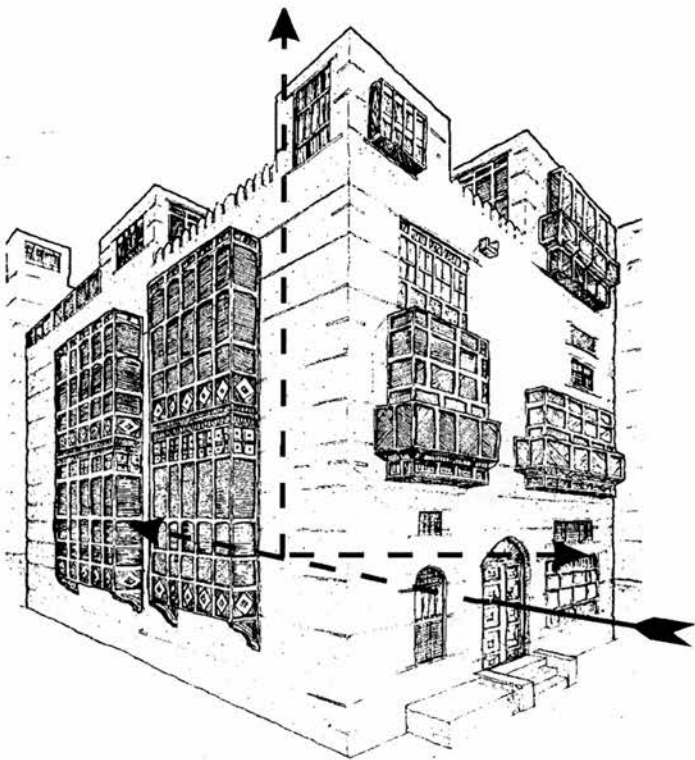


Fig. 7.8. In a traditional Ḥedjāzī house, the closer you are to the family, the deeper and higher you can go.

Height was not only a physical expression of privacy but was also a symbolic one. If a person from the neighbourhood was to marry the daughter of a certain family, it was said that he would be '*itraffa*', or be socially promoted within the bride's family (Fig. 7.9.). It also meant that he can go to the higher floors of the house as a family member within the limits of the customary gender segregation (men areas). Therefore, and as mentioned earlier, the sense of being inside the house is not necessarily related to the physical boundaries of the house; rather it is dependent on the actual floor relative to the house. The higher the level the more *inside* it is perceived to be.

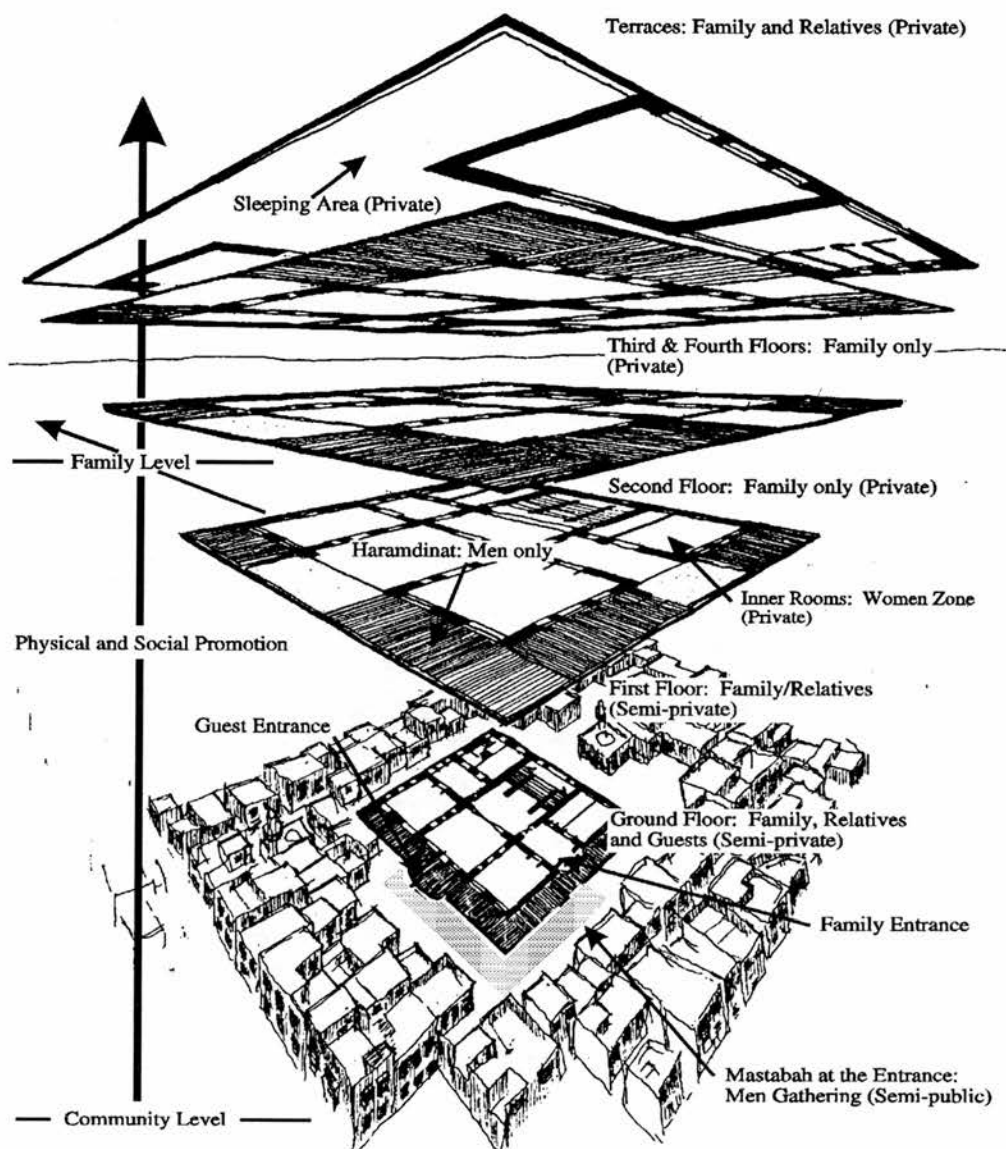


Fig. 7.9. The principle of privacy in traditional Hedjaz.

The provision of more than one entrance to the house was another means of maintaining privacy in the house, minimizing the contact between men and women in terms of movement to and inside the house. In large houses, separate staircases were provided so as to lead male guests to reception terraces or upper *madjālis* without disrupting the activities of females in the house<sup>39</sup>. Visitors' staircases did not lead to all floors but only to those which housed designated reception areas.

<sup>39</sup> There was always a hint in *mu'ellem* Şaḍāqah's speech as well as in those of other male interviewees of a possible 'femininity' of the traditional Hedjāzī house as the domain of women: the idea of being a guest in someone's house was always preoccupied with the concern of disturbing the rhythm of the place where the ladies might be alerted.

The use of the *rawāshīn*, *ṭāqāt*, *shīsh*, and parapets as visual-access controls was another major tool by which the traditional Ḥedjāzī house achieved privacy to its interior. As we see in chapter six, the structure of the *rowshān* was devised in such a way that anyone sitting inside it would become fully invisible up to his waist-line and then covered with meshed-screens up to his head. In ground floor *rawāshīn*, the whole room was raised about 1.5 to 2.5 meters above street level (also eye-level) so as to assure the user of the *rowshān* total avoidance of attentive eyes (Fig. 7.10.).

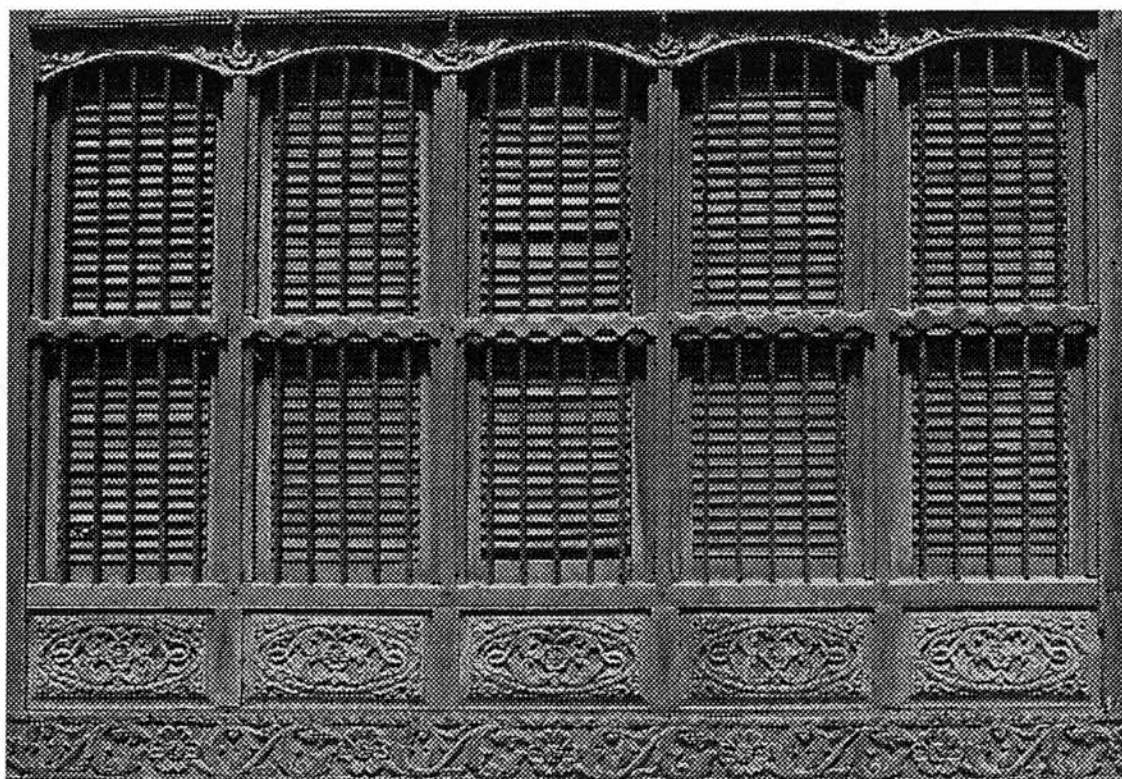


Fig. 7.10. Anyone sitting inside a *rowshān* would become fully invisible up to the waist line and then covered with meshed screen up to the head.

The maintenance of the house privacy was one of the *mu'allem's* vital responsibilities. If, for example, one of his clients asked him for a *rowshān* which was going to over-look a neighbour's *khārdjah* (although any reasonable client at the time would recognize that this was a virtually unacceptable request, in fact non-negotiable), the *mu'allem* - knowing the rules and regulations in such cases - would object to it. But if the client happened to insist on having such an opening, the *mu'allem* would try to gain permission from the neighbour to allow it. This required a meeting between the *mu'allem* and the neighbour in the presence of a witness "...in order to hear it

from the neighbour's mouth."<sup>40</sup> However, if the house were surrounded by a large enough piece of ground, with no neighbours close by, it could have openings on any elevation according to choice or the *asbaqiyyah* (right or priority) of the owner.

Where building took place in confined areas, the space between houses was regulated by the distance at which windows could face out *mertāḥah* (lit. comfortably = without harming others). The minimum distance was eventually standardized at five meters. Furthermore, no one was permitted to install a window in an existing house if the street separating his house from that across the street was less than five meters wide. It was the *mu'allem*'s role to ensure 'at any cost' that these controls were not infringed and certainly not merely to satisfy a client's wish for a door, a window or a balcony where this would disturb the privacy of the other residents of the *ḥāra*. Such lapses would be his responsibility and he would share the disgrace with the owner in the eyes of the community.

May God bestow His Peace upon Him (Prophet Muhammad) once said to his friends: "*Do you know the rights of you neighbour: that you should not build to prevent the breeze from his house before you ask for his permission, to grant him peace, to respect his privacy and to feed him even if he lives seven houses away from you.*"<sup>41</sup> If I dared to fool myself and accept a client's request against the will of God, people would say this *mu'allem* does not have *'ār* [honour], *shakhṣiyyah* [firm word, strength of character], nor *millah* [religious faith]

...take another example, the *khārdjah*, if a client, for example, happen to ask me for a removal of the parapets and sleep where everyone can see him - which is impossible - I will never agree to such a request nor will another *mu'allem* because the religious command is so explicit: 'no one should sleep in a roof that is not protected or screened.'<sup>42</sup> (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

---

<sup>40</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990.

<sup>41</sup> An authentic Prophetic *Ḥadīth* that was narrated in this occasion by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin in an informal manner "as I learned it from the street *ḥakāwātī* (story-teller)." (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

<sup>42</sup> An authentic Prophetic *Ḥadīth* narrated by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin in its informal format.



### 7.2.2. Implicit codes versus explicit norms and rules for social control of privacy

O ye who believe! enter not houses other than yours, until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them: that is best for you in order that ye may heed (what is seemly).

If ye find no one in the house, enter not until permission is given to you: if ye are asked to go back, go back: that makes for greater purity for yourselves: and God knows well all that ye do.

It is no fault on your part to enter houses not used for living in, which serve some (other) use for you: and God has knowledge of what ye reveal and what ye conceal.

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: and God is well acquainted with all that they do.

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free from physical needs, or small children who have no sense of shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And o ye Believers! turn ye all together towards God, that ye may attain bliss. (*Qur'ān, Sūra XXIV: 27-31, Nūr*)<sup>43</sup>.

The education of Ḥedjāzīs - as discussed in previous chapters - is a mix of Islamic teachings and ancient Arabian customs which merged over the years to form the Ḥedjāzī norms and habits. These include a very strict code of personal conduct and social and public behaviour with regard to the genders and different age groups. The convention and restriction applied to social relations tend to be more rigorously

---

<sup>43</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali's interpretation of these verses suggests that "*The Muslim principle of asking respectful permission and exchanging salutations ensures privacy without exclusiveness, and friendliness without undue familiarity,....Because privacy is precious, and essential to a refined, decent and well ordered life, [entry without obtaining permission] is a breach of refined manners.*" Ali, Yusuf A. *The Holy Qur'ān: Text Translation and Commentary*. USA: The American Trust Publication, 1977. 903-904.



observed among non-relatives and could be regarded as a filter for maintaining privacy at the neighbourhood level:

If we saw a woman coming towards our way, we knew what to do, we changed lanes, looked to the ground or the other direction until she passed. (*Mu'alleem Şaḍaḡah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

This non-verbal code also safeguarded the privacy of the elderly men and women, providing them with 'noise-free' areas and private gathering-places without the interference of younger age-groups (the elderly of Ḥedjāz prefer the company of similar age-groups for most of the day). Quietness is valued in Ḥedjāz, especially in the traditional multi-family houses where the comfort of elder members of the family occupies the highest level of domestic priority.

At the domestic level, the normal conduct of Muslim visitors, as well as the culturally accepted behaviour dictates that no one be allowed inside the house except with the permission and in the company of the house owner. This means that the visitor will be shown to the reception area after the owner has checked with the women of the house that none of them are in the way or in any of the reception areas. As discussed in chapter eleven, the diminishing importance of such manners and rules of proper conduct in modern Ḥedjāz resulted in extreme dissatisfaction by my elderly informants, as one of them protested:

One's house is like one's body, it belongs to us individually for the fulfilment of very personal functions. Who would want or dare to make his body public. Only a proper balance can save us a lot of social problems. Our houses today are so public that it is not private any more, I am sorry to say that our guests today run around and inside our houses like wild sheep, that they do not know where to stop. It is not your fault or mine, but no one taught them where to stop. You young Ḥedjāzīes build your own houses to satisfy your guests not yourselves, no wonder then. ('Afīf family, Jeddah, May 8, 1990).

It is the norm - again a religious command merging with a tradition - that the visitor should turn his back to the entrance of the house immediately after he knocks on the door until he hears the voice of his host permitting him to come in. Otherwise, after the third knock<sup>44</sup>, the visitor will leave. Unlike most of the houses in the Arab

---

<sup>44</sup> Usually a visitor would call out the name of his host loudly in order to identify himself, signal his presence to the family and ask the women to clear the appropriate reception area.

world which contained bent-entrances or other visual barriers, achieved through different architectural devices, this custom enabled such considerations to be dispersed within the Ḥedjāzī house.

Related to this custom, the use of a number of verbal codes represented by the terms *ṭarīq* or *yā Sātir* (give way, O Ye Who protects and covers, O Concealer = names of God) and *dastūr yā ahl al-bait* (permission, ye dwellers of the house) was meant to draw the attention of women inside the house to the arrival of men (or vice versa). The women could then withdraw to their upper or inner apartments and leave the entire floor for male guests.

These verbal codes had more than just the force of practical instruction; they had a social evocation which was reflected in the design characteristics of the Ḥedjāzī house. Such codes could turn a private reception area into a semi-public place for men within seconds (Fig. 7.11.). This meant that the same areas of the house could be used for different functions without assigning special places for each gender. Depending on the occasion, the main *madjlis* of the house could be used by female guests who could withdraw to the private family quarters upon the arrival of male guests (who did not have the same freedom of movement within the house)<sup>45</sup>.

...if you did not see anybody coming, say when you were approaching or sitting in someone's house, as soon as you hear words like *ṭarīq*, *yā sātir* or *dastūr yā ahl al-bait*, we immediately faced the wall, left the place all together or just looked to the floor. This was applied to both men and women. Women clapped their hands to announce their arrival because their voices should not be heard by strangers....In our Ḥedjāz, black were the days of someone who had the reputation of being *abu 'ain ṭawīlah* [long-eyed = rude gazer/coaxer] (al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

It was the norm, however, that intimate friends of the men of the house could move freely around the *madjālīs* of the ground floor, where no women were expected to dwell or circulate. Extreme precautions, however, would be taken while circulating beyond these rooms without the company of a member of the household (the latter case was almost impossible in traditional Ḥedjāz).

---

<sup>45</sup> In such cases, what was known as *madjlis el-ridjāl* (men sitting room) becomes *madjlis el-sittāt*, or *al-ḥarīm* (ladies sitting room) within seconds.

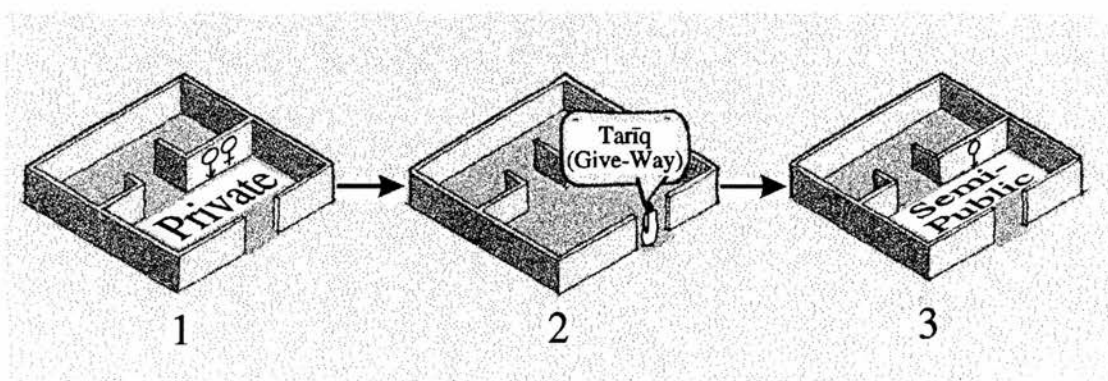


Fig. 7.11. The word '*tariq*' had more than just the force of practical instruction.

The fact that the traditional Hedjazi house accommodated a number of families - relatives and non-relatives - could have led to conflicts between the private parts of each family apartment. However, the existence of both implicit and explicit mechanisms saved the families a great deal of such conflicts. For example, in the initial stages of accommodating a new family in the house, the principle of *al-jār gabl al-dār* (ask about the neighbour before you ask about the house) functioned as a filter that prevented landlords from letting their houses to unmarried, misbehaving or ill-reputed individuals<sup>46</sup>.

One of the major social problems that traditional Hedjāz was suffering from was *ḥārawīyyah* which was an exaggerated notion of privacy. It meant that a youth from one neighbourhood would not allow someone from an adjacent neighbourhood to stroll their streets and alleys or 'territory' (even praying in a local mosque) unless accompanied by a resident of this area<sup>47</sup>. This behaviour was justified by those youngsters as for the privacy-maintenance of the *ḥāra* and its ladies from the visual or verbal disturbance of others (attempting any sort of physical contact even with

<sup>46</sup> This Hedjazi proverb was a two way process that was applied by both prospect tenants and landlords. Both would choose people with 'satisfied-eyes,' or those who would not invade the privacy of others, or look without covetousness on the good fortune of others.

<sup>47</sup> During his visits to Makkah in 1884, Snouck Hurgronje commented on the *ḥārawīyyah* as: "No man of one of the quarters can then venture from his own quarter into the other without the danger of stones being thrown at him from houses or even, in the night time, of him being attacked with knives." See Hurgronje, Snouck C. *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*. Trans. J. H. Monahan. London: Luzac and Co., 1931. 9.

related females was inconceivable). Such modes of control went to extremes and in most cases involved severe beatings and even murder<sup>48</sup>.

The other reason for the emergence of the phenomenon of *ḥārāwīyyah* was that in such a tradition-directed society as the one in question, there existed a clear category of insider/outsider in every neighbourhood. As discussed in the following chapter, the insider was the familiar, the one who was 'at home,' the one who belonged to the particular *ḥāra*. The outsider, on the other hand, was the stranger, the one who was from 'away,' from another *ḥāra* and who did not belong. Because members of the *ḥāra* were known to each other, the presence of non-members in one's midst was immediately apparent, and to the youngsters of the *ḥāra* this presence was, in most cases, not desirable (unless fully justified).

Within a group of youngsters within one *ḥāra* - known as a *bashkah* - strict codes of ethics were observed by all members. *Oṣūl al-bishakk* (lit. fundamentals = traditions and conventions of groups) functioned as guidelines to the accepted norms of behaviours as well as tools of supervising the observation of such norms. A young man from a certain *ḥāra* would not deviate from the locally-accepted norms even if he so wished. For example, he would not admit a friend of his to the *ḥāra* if that friend was not desired by the *bashkah* because of his ill-reputation. The policing of the *ḥāra* by the *bashkah* was extended to all sort of socio-cultural events that took place in the neighbourhood. This included, for example, the guarding of a lane where a *walīmah* (banquet) took place against uninvited spectators - as the preparation of food was usually carried out in the open, on a side-lane adjacent to the house.

Besides the previously discussed architectural methods of maintaining privacy at both the levels of the neighbourhood and the house, there were widely observed social devices intended to deal with instances of conflict between neighbours over windows or terraces overlooking each other's houses. For example, there was the institution of *tarāḍī* (agreement or treaty) between neighbours to open windows at distances much less than five meters, based on two important socio-cultural concepts of common welfare:

---

<sup>48</sup> As mentioned in chapter four, Mr Hussain Jar - who lived in the old part of Jeddah (in a traditional house which was built in the 1800s AD/1220s AH) and one of the members of the interviews team - had a younger uncle who was killed in an infamous fight just after their house was built, because he was praising a bridegroom from his neighbourhood in another *ḥāra*.

First: *kollanā amānāt ba'aḍ* (we are all the custodians, the trustees, and the guardians of each other). Second: Your faith will not be complete until you wish for your brother what you wish for yourself. [A gentlemen's agreement means that] we - the neighbours - trust each other beyond any rules or regulations, therefore if your window was to touch mine, I shall rest assured that you will not think of looking at my *ḥarīm*, let alone attempting to invade the privacy of my house. Because I know that you would not like me to look through your windows and you want to be fair with me. Although Islam laid down penalties as in the Prophet's *Ḥadīth* that he who looks into a house without permission of its owner will have his eyes punctured. This referred to periods full of sick [perverted] people, when people start doubting each other's honesty and hearts became full of misunderstanding and suspicion. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī*, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

This principle meant that upon *tarāḍī*, neighbours could waive or overrule the formal building regulations and would be witnessed and recorded by *sheikh al-mu'allemīn* or the *'omdah*. The firm societal belief of the general Islamic principle stating that one should not harm others or oneself, and others should not harm oneself or themselves guaranteed that the socio-religious principle of *tarāḍī* would be respected by the following generations of house-owners until a complaint to the *'omdah* or local judge were raised to *raf' al-ḍarar* (alleviate the harm) by revoking the original agreement.

## Comment

To sum up, the existence of a privacy hierarchy or gradient in traditional Ḥedjāz played a great role as far as its effect on the house design was concerned. This privacy gradient structured the position of interior spaces, leading from the most accessible to the most private, least accessible and least visible. All traditional Ḥedjāzī houses exhibited a consistent gradient that existed from the most public to the most private rooms inside each house. As we see in the physical morphology of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house (chapter three), the relative position of the entrance-hall for example, to the other rooms of the house illustrates that although there was no direct correlation between the nominal distance between the rooms in each house, there is an underlying structure that enables the position of rooms to be considered with respect to the desired degree of privacy envisaged by the residents.



This privacy gradient was not only important in the location of rooms relative to the public realm of the *ḥāra*, but also in defining the spatial relations between rooms. That is, whether they were accessible only from a circulation corridor (i.e., *al-ṣuffah*), or whether there was sequencing of spaces or change of levels between them.

It is to be noted, however, that the maintenance of privacy in the traditional Ḥedjāzī house could be considered as a 'lump sum,' meaning that people were more concerned with the privacy for the entire family from the outside world. Internally, there was no privacy for the individual as the term privacy would indicate. If privacy means the decent seclusion of the individual, the right to do what one likes unwatched, un-criticized and unhindered, then only the elderly of the household enjoyed such privacy in traditional Ḥedjāzī houses. For the younger generations, the house did not provide full privacy. This was a point raised by a female member from the 'Afīf family as a negative aspect of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house:

Privacy does not mean selfishness or supremacy of one person over the other. The general principle in traditional Ḥedjāz was ideally the expansion of home through the extended family by loving inclusion of each and every family member rather than possessive invasion by elder brothers and sisters because they were culturally in a position to do so.

But the very concept of the 'family house' dictated the utmost communality of all activities and all spaces in the house, almost at all times. This is, of course, different from the seclusion of different gender and age groups, but within any given group, the privacy of the individual was not fully known as such. Mothers, especially, didn't know that the concept of privacy even existed except in her bed chamber. Mothers' time was shared by children, husband, relatives, guests and servants.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE ḤEDJĀZĪ SENSE OF PLACE

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE TRADITIONAL HEDJĀZĪ SENSE OF PLACE

---

#### Introduction

It is God who made your habitations homes of rest and quiet for you; and made for you, out of the skins of animals, (tents for) dwelling, which ye find so light (and handy) when ye travel and when ye stop (in your travel); and out of their wool and their soft fibres (between wool and hair), and their hair, rich stuff and articles of convenience (to serve you) for a time. (*Qur'ān, Sūra XVI: 80, Al-Nahl*)<sup>1</sup>.

In chapters three and six, we looked at the house in its mostly technical aspects - as a process - and as an expression of practical demands. This chapter, in extending the attempt of chapter seven to examine the house as a cultural unit, further explores its 'meanings': it illustrates the ways in which the house is as important to its occupants as a 'set of symbols' as it is for its utilitarian value. To do so it is necessary to look beyond the temporal influences on architecture and consider those abstractions which ultimately define intrinsic appeal. The major aim of the chapter, by focusing on perceptions of spirit, character, atmosphere, location (space) and the sense of place, is to understand the mechanisms which link people and environments, the house and its dwellers. It also aims to persuade that through an appreciation of these, an awareness and sympathy with the traditional values behind the domestic architecture of the past can be gained which will enable modern architects to create valid, sensitive and culturally authentic houses and urban settings for the future.

We need to understand the sources of a particular sense of place, to specify the environmental elements that make one place different from another, and to understand people's commitment to certain places. Bearing in mind that the meaning of a house

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the interpretation of this verse by Yusuf Ali: man's social, intellectual, and spiritual gifts make, of his permanent dwelling, homes of rest and quiet, of refinement and the purer affections, which are the types in this earthly life, of the highest spiritual good, the love of God. The pure Home thus becomes the type of the highest spiritual destiny of man. And these capacities in man are the gifts of God. See Ali, Yusuf. A. The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary. USA: The American Trust Publications, 1977.

is un-interpretable without its context and its accompanying cues from other symbolic systems, the analysis of traditional domestic architecture alone would not reveal the 'hidden' layers of meaning examined in chapter seven, which are sought in this research. Meanings revealed by the people who built these places uncover the qualities which make home what it is, and, as Heidegger puts it, will illustrate that human existence is unquestionably spatial, environmental and architectural and thus inseparable from spirit of place<sup>2</sup>.

There is a point which should be mentioned here. It will be noticed that the recollections of traditional builders and their clients - presented in this research - are expressed to a great extent in figurative terms. This is understandable in that they were trying to describe experiences which are subtle and, in terms of directly applied vocabulary, highly elusive. Descriptions are therefore rendered in terms of parallel but explainable experiences (e.g., the feeling of being uncomfortable or ill at ease in the home is conveyed by the sense of being watched). Moreover, 'at homeness' seems to have been taken for granted and the traditional way of life was neither questioned nor the subject of explicit attention (perhaps until these interviews were conducted). The component phenomena were easier 'experienced' than described. Therefore, when they speak of such, we must be careful to keep this element of metaphor in mind to avoid misleading interpretations.

It will be useful at this point to differentiate the words of 'house' and 'home' in the Ḥedjāzī dialect in order to satisfy the reader that the interviewer and interviewee were talking about the same thing. The Arabic words relating to 'house' belong to the language of pre-Islamic times. They were all absorbed into the language of the Holy Qur'ān and their meaning varied according to the context of the verse.

The word *bait* was used to mean: society, object, instrument, family, house, resident, structure, heart, place, mansion, wealth, company, privacy, domain, dwelling, edifice, cell and habitation. The word *dār* was used to mean: home, mansion and life. The word *manzel* was used to mean: entertainment, settlement, hospitable homes, hospitable gifts, mansions, grades and levels. The words *maskan*, *masāken* or *sakan* were used to mean: serenity, tranquillity, rest, composure, peace, to dwell, to belong,

---

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. (A translation of "Sein Und Zeit.") by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1962. 54.

to exist, to be still, to lurk, to be quiescent, as a letter which is not moved by a vowel, to abide, to dwell together and bring up a family, habitations, to live, dwelling, place and space<sup>3</sup>.

In the Ḥedjāzī dialect, the most commonly used words for house and home are: *maḥīl* = a place: house, room, and shop, and *bait* = house and family<sup>4</sup>. These two words are used interchangeably to express a range of meanings which include 'place' in the physical, social and spiritual senses. The exact meanings of these words are understood from their use in context or theme of discussion. For example, when it is asked how a *bait* (house) is to be 'constructed', what is referred to is the structure. The same question, using the word for 'build' in a different sense of development, when applied to the word *bait* renders it to mean 'family' and therefore refers to the development of a house from a social point of view<sup>5</sup>. In order to encapsulate the meaning of the English language term 'home' in its abstract sense, the question was best illustrated by asking the interviewer "*where, outside your house, can you feel as if you were at your house?*" Once this meaning was established, it maintained throughout the conversation. Each interviewer described his sentiments of home indirectly by describing his experience of places elsewhere.

An important observation made throughout these interviews was that although the house was generally seen as a place of continuity across the past, present and future, whether to an individual, a family or the whole community, most of the examples of 'home' portrayed by the respondents were of their traditional homes when they were children or young adults. Regardless of income or social status, everyone seem to have an idealized memory of their childhood house where the serenity of the past seemed removed from the problems of the present. These idealised images of home also seemed to be fixed in a certain time after which they ceased to exist and were never projected upon their present homes. While I found this phenomenon to be

---

<sup>3</sup> These terms were extracted from the translation of the holy Qur'ān by Yusuf Ali.

<sup>4</sup> The words *sakan*, *maskan* and *manzel* are also used in Ḥedjāz but not as frequently.

<sup>5</sup> For example, a Ḥedjāzī would say: "*kaif ḥāl bait 'am Aḥmad* (lit. How is the house of Mr Aḥmad)," to mean "*how is Mr Aḥmad and family.*"

universal<sup>6</sup> rather than culture-dependent, it is worth emphasizing that this sense of 'home' has a deep emotional focus beyond mere nostalgia. This 'imagining of home' is not simply endemic romanticism but a reaction to the insufficiency of their present homes in satisfying the ethos of traditional life. The past and the present worlds are in disharmony.

Reflecting this, the present homes of most respondents are decorated or equipped with traditional items as physical reminders of the past, the *maṣṭabah* on the gate, fully-functioning *rawāshīn* and so on, as if these can bring the past into the present or can ensure that the past and present will continue into the future. Traditional rituals, values and customs, still alive among elder residents, are also revived intentionally and imposed on grandsons during their visits to these homes (e.g., the embargo on smoking or drinking coffee in the presence of the grandfather). Such social customs helped the elderly to bridge the gap between present and past homes by creating a sense of the continuity of the traditional familiar lifestyle.

To think of home is to think of the past, of something that is missing. 'Home' is the standard by which the elderly of Ḥedjāz measure their dissatisfaction with the present: "*Your old is your friend, even if the new satisfies you.*"<sup>7</sup> It seems to be a constant comparison of the way things are and the way they should be - realities with ideals - that disturbs the elderly of Ḥedjāz. As discussed in chapter seven (and later in this chapter), home in traditional Ḥedjāz was much more than a building, it was the neighbourhood, the gathering place, the city, the region of Ḥedjāz and, above all, a state of mind. Their present homes, though still the focus of their domestic life, ultimately appears empty and contaminated by the present. These homes are still centres of attraction but not centres of growth or activity.

---

<sup>6</sup> The writings of most 18th and 19th centuries authors like Julia Wright (*The Complete Home*, 1870), Charles Dickens (*In Mother, Home and Heaven*, 1879), James Froude (*The Nemesis of Faith*, 1849), Udolpho (*In The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794), John Ruskin (*Sesame and Lilies*, 1865), all seem to praise the homes of childhood whether directly or through the characters in their novels.

<sup>7</sup> A traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb meaning that one should not give up his old things, values, beliefs and so on, even if the newly-introduced substitute is more appealing.

### 8.1. House and home from a traditional Hedjāzī perspective

In order to comprehend any culturally-based experience of the personal or architectural meaning of place, one must understand how people lived and how they incorporated settlements and shelters into the pattern of their everyday existence, into their lives. This is best approached in the perspective of the questions of what human dwelling on earth is and how it is possible to have a 'home'; what the relationship is between man and his world; what the state of connectedness is which generates a feeling of 'being at home'; whether home is the area that links self to the world. Answers to some of these questions were revealed through the examination of the traditional Hedjāzī perception of 'home.' To begin with, a 19th century home owner, asked about his perception of the house as a structure, would reply that it was that:

First of all, you will find that everyone wants God's forgiveness, good health and God's mercy and *sutrah*<sup>8</sup> [shelter] in this life and in the hereafter, then a house which has large rooms with generous headroom [or high ceilings], large decorated wooden *rawāshīn* [bay-windows], decent-sized ornamented two-leaf doors, cool and clean terraces, covered balconies with wooden arches, dignified and well furnished reception-rooms with large openings and an entrance sitting platform topped with mattresses... but, after all, whatever God bestows upon me is good. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

As a physical object, the house is a building with measurable dimensions, built of certain building materials with certain proportions to satisfy certain spatial requirements and so on. As a practical object it is a shelter from the elements for one's self, family and personal belongings. But while a house is an architectural object, a Home does not have to be a building; a house could be a home but a home is not necessarily a house. Home is more of a neutral, spiritual and emotional place than a physical one. It is not merely a homogeneous, rational and measured space. It is a place chosen, incorporated and transformed by one's personal experience into one's own, one's self. People see their houses and neighbourhoods as home, birth place, and an amalgam of memories and events before they see it as a physical form. The traditional concept of home embraces much more than its physical characteristics:

---

<sup>8</sup> *Sutrah* in this sense is also used to mean: satisfaction with what God bestowed upon someone, shielding from evil, jealous or covetous eyes, protection from being exposed (e.g., by a scandal), mercy from God's severe punishment and fate.



My home is the place I can come back to every night, find my family safe and happy, watch my children grow and get married, obey and take care of my old parents, comprehend their wisdom, and try to deliver it to my sons as much as I can. Its the place I live in and live for, I will make sure its not lacking food, water and lighting-oil [provisions]. I guard it as I guard my reputation and honour, make sure that my visitors enter happy and leave happier, although everyone dreams that his guests would leave sad that they left his generosity and excellent reception. I want my *madjlis* to be full of people - family, neighbours, friends, relatives, children, every body, every body. *Al-bait mā yiḥiyyā 'illā bi'ahlū wu zouārūh* [A house gains life only from the number of family members who occupy it and the guests who stay]. But when I want to sleep, I want to find it cool, dim and quiet, until the mother of my children wakes me up with her tasty cup of tea. My home is almost all that I own in this life. If I built it well, it will treat me well and will enhance the remaining days of my life, just like ones *bizūrah* [seeds = children]. It is very important that you build a house of your own. You will have a different feeling when you own this thing. (Al-Makkī, May 18, Jeddah, 1990).

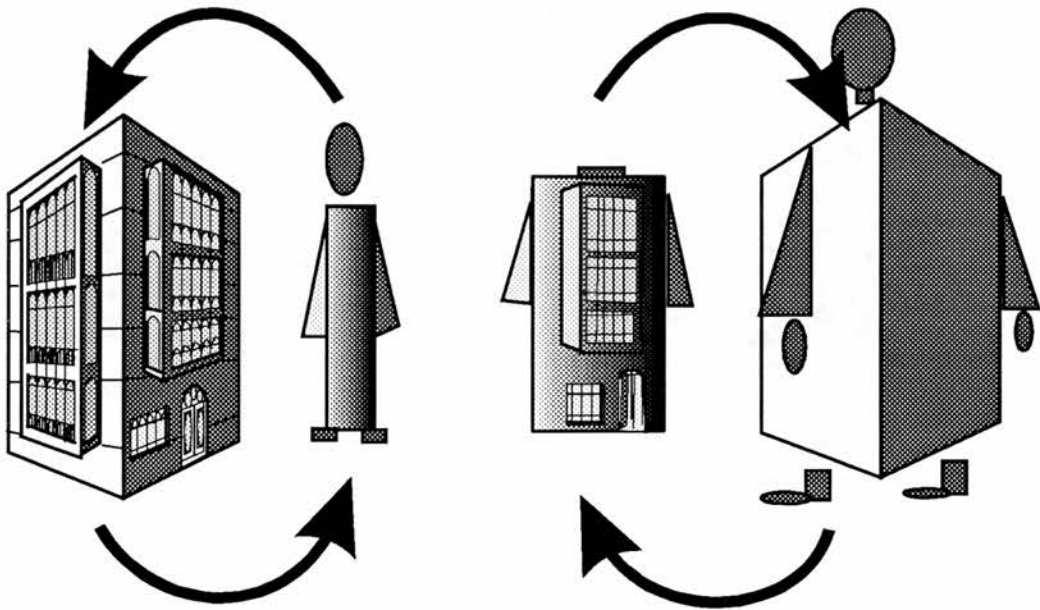


Fig. 8.1. Through incorporation we develop and gain a distinct sense of our home enveloping us with the tissues of our own bodies.

Like its shell to a snail, home is our ultimate, intimate refuge within our wider surroundings and we invest in it our characters and personalities in the process of assimilating it within our scheme of comfort and familiarity. Through such incorporation we develop and gain a distinct sense of our home enveloping us with the tissues of our own bodies (Fig. 8.1.).

This emotional sphere we create is the place we support, we live with and live in. Home may very well be regarded as our lives. It is developed, moulded, changed and enhanced by the same influences to which we ourselves respond. Home delivers us from the infinite abstract space of geometry and places us in a space of our own dimensions, in a space which gives itself to us and responds to us. It is an area between the self and the world, a place of self-expression as well as a means of engaging with life. Home involves some kind of continuity; it is a means rather than an end.

### 8.1.1. The three homes: body, dwelling, and the universe

As discussed in chapter seven, the traditional house of Ḥedjāz, was seen as a living element of the society where house components shared their names with those of the human body (e.g., *rās al-bāb* = head of the door = top rail, *rās al-'amūd* = head of the column = capital)<sup>9</sup>. The identification of parts of the house with the human body did not reflect visual proportions as in the architecture of the Renaissance; more that the traditional builders were expressing the commonly-felt relationship between the perfection of man's creation and the place that housed it. In discussing the Ḥedjāzī domestic architecture it is impossible to speak of a house without, at least, implicit reference to the human body. It is treated as a being in itself, not just a place of shelter. Like the human body, the house is felt to be more than its structure; it is the material repository of its spirit. The identity of this house implied a strong bonding between building, man and place. The integrity of this connection was that there was a mutual identification between the dweller and the dwelling.

Similar to the organization of man, body and brain are not separate entities: "*comfort is for those with brains.*"<sup>10</sup> The human body (including the mind) belongs

---

<sup>9</sup> *Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī* (Jeddah, March 29-30, 1990) and *mu'alleṃ Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rifī* (Al-Madinah, April 25-30, 1990) thought that the only difference between humans and houses was that the house was more fortunate than humans, for it could be renovated and could become 'young' again as we see in chapter seven. Furthermore, the *mu'alleṃīn* of Ḥedjāz thought that the overall structure of the house resembled that of the human body in that both are a combination of tension and compression structures. Changes in one part of either would effect other parts, while restricting movement in one part overuses and stresses the rest of the structural system.

<sup>10</sup> A traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb which means that one must use his intellect to achieve one's bodily comfort.

to the realm of culture and is shaped and regulated by it. Correspondingly, the top section of the Ḥedjāzī house as we see in chapter seven accommodated the living quarters of the head of the family and other senior members who were considered to be supreme in authority and decision making. Therefore, the traditional Ḥedjāzī belief that some houses have *wedjīh kāliḥah* (dim or sad faces) is a natural outcome of their conception that man's action is a mirror of his intentions and that the muscular changes of his face corresponds to changes of his state of mind: if the inhabitants of the house were sad individuals, this will show on the house!

As also seen in chapter seven, the middle and lower parts of the human being corresponded with those of the house to suggest similarity and integrity between both. Therefore, thinking of home as embodied, as a kind of second body; means to see in it different aspects of life. Moving from one room to another, from downstairs to upstairs, from inside to outside, means a completely different experience of home with each of these movements. It changes from one place to another in accordance with our association with these different places. This attitude towards home is opposed to that rational, scientific attitude which understands each different place as a space of different dimensions and proportions - quantifiable objects and things. Home, on the contrary, is a psychological attitude, a state of mind where things are part of our human experience of these things. They almost speak our language, to us and through us. As such, home is very individualistic and it is as different and particular as every human being on this planet.

To most *mu'allemin* and elders of Ḥedjāz, home in the sense we are talking about is...

...in one's head and heart and so is its comfort, it only needs a place to settle in. Our real home is in our heads, wherever we go it goes with us. But the place where we settle (the home in your head) is the place where, when we come back to it we can find it waiting for us and where when we feel tired we can come back to. It so happened that this 'home in the head' is best settled within the four walls and under the ceilings of our houses. (Al-Makkī, May 18, Jeddah, 1990).

The concept of "home in one's head" reinforces the argument of this chapter that being at home is a state of mind before it is a presence in a particular place. This state of mind or 'at homeness' could very well be found in a group of loving friends. But it seems to need an attachment to *place* more than to people in order to be fully

satisfied and born<sup>11</sup>. The place mentioned here (the one where you settle the home in your head) means, perhaps, where one can be at home with oneself, which is harder than being in one's house or in the world. What I gathered is that this place is a chosen one, chosen according to certain criteria that the individual sets as conditions for the place where he would settle in and inhabit. Such criteria are a product of the values, mores, customs, traditions and ideals that the individual would like to be represented around or within his home.

This, of course, is 'choice' in the ideal and it must compromise with the various constraints of resources, knowledge, technology, availability, prejudice and much else. However, even in cases where choices are not applicable, this would not reduce the significance of dwelling. Let us say that among those who have choice, inhabiting is an intention; it is not just to be somewhere, but to inhabit a certain place. If we conceptualize any environment or lifestyle as the result of a series of choices tending toward some implicit ideal images, then we can also say that people choose to inhabit environments that can afford to express their inner-selves, certain environments that match their image of home. Since choice - among the socio-economic level discussed here - was present in most situations, then it follows that these homes or environments reflect people's preferences more than it does other variables (e.g., financial resources).

It is almost axiomatic that the human individual has an essential and inevitable need to recognize some form of commitment to the place of one's birth or early life. This natural commitment is the partial source of the strong sentiment for previous homes that was evident throughout the interviews, even amongst those who did not have a happy childhood home life. But the commitment to a dwelling place, in the full exercise of choice, is predicated upon a wish to live within a certain environment, to belong to a certain place, to be 'at home.' For such reasons, those born in one place frequently choose to settle in another at a later stage in life. Inhabiting is what Heidegger called "*the basic character of being*."<sup>12</sup> It is not something to be taken for granted, but like friendship, it is a relationship that must be worked at.

---

<sup>11</sup> Although a counter traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb asserts that "a paradise without people is not worth stepping into."

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, Martin. "Building, Dwelling, Thinking." Poetry, Language, Thought. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. 143.

What we learn from chapter seven is that the Ḥedjāzīs, like ordinary human beings, seem to carry their lives through their values, mores, beliefs, dreams, inspirations and biological needs. With these in mind, they shape their houses in both conscious and unpretentious fashions simultaneously, the aims of which are to change an anonymous space in the universe into a familiar place, into Home.

There are two processes involved in the situation where the place within which we exist, or we come to occupy, becomes our personal domain and home. One is that of **transforming** objective **space** into a **place**, and the other is that of **incorporating** this place into our daily-life. Both transformation and incorporation are central to the subjective features of our existence and are active and mutually supporting trends in a pattern of reciprocal assimilation. These processes involves the appropriation of a certain space by taking-over, becoming familiar with, investing with meaning, cultivating and caring for, and displaying identity and belonging with a place. A neutral space is transformed into a familiar place when we are able to project our own general spirit upon it as when we buy a house and equip and furnish it according to our tastes, personality, character, values, ...etc. (of course, the importance of companions, family, friends, or what have you is part ultimately of this picture as discussed later in the chapter). But we are, in turn, influenced by this place in a manner to which we can respond and which is, in itself, a reflection of our character through the ways in which we act upon the place and how we relate to it. Such feelings are sublimated in a process of incorporation whereby the place and features of it are assimilated into our lives with an intimacy like that of parts of our person.

When a place is addressed and referred to as 'home' it is a declaration and an assertion that this place has been transformed from its status in impersonal objectivity and been incorporated within our own intimate reality. It, and all its features, have been successfully transmuted into something which is spiritually annexed to ourselves by virtue of the process of incorporation. As our physical presence extrudes throughout the house and touches the things in it, it breathes life into them and places them within our intimate circles, so that they function as extensions of our body and become a part of our identity. It is not surprising that the house and its parts and features were identified in traditional Ḥedjāz with the human body, for after a certain period of time, these and body become as one.



Such transformations were evident throughout the interviews with the elders of Ḥedjāz. The notion of incorporation suggests that when people attach psychological, social and cultural significance to objects and spaces, they thereby bond themselves and the space or object (environment) into a unity. For example, most of the respondents did not sell their old furniture like carpets, chests and even old cars. To most of them, these are not mere 'things,' they are reminders of forefathers and their time. *"They smell like them,"* remarked an elderly member of one family. Pointing at an old chest, he explained that it was a piece of his father's furniture, and that it *"feels like him - may God bless his soul."* With such a property in mind, this chest could not be sold *"even for a million riyals."*<sup>13</sup> In this chest or similar pieces of furniture, the family saw their age, a record of memories of past events running by their eyes upon looking at their old belongings, *"how then can we depart from these things and let someone else toy with them. It would be like suggesting someone else sleep in our beds, which is shameful and obscene in traditional Ḥedjāz."*<sup>14</sup>

People grew attached to furniture and even utensils of their houses sometimes solely because of its memory association with their parents, neighbours, friends and other loved ones:

You know if I saw a chest like this in the shop, I would only give it a second glance because it resembles mine. That is all. But if I bought it and used it for a year, you have to cut it off my flesh to would take it from me. Not because I am acquisitive or because of their value. By God. No! Can someone sell his peace of mind? Of course not! These things give me peace of mind when I gaze at them in the afternoon. What is between me and these items is bread and salt<sup>15</sup>. ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

In the same way, a *rowshān* for an anonymous client in the carpenter's workshop is just an object until it is attached to a certain house or associated with a familiar family name. It is then that the *rowshān* is associated as being the intimate sitting area of the father of the family and the peaceful sleeping corner of the children.

---

<sup>13</sup> 'Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> *A 'aish wa-milh* (lit. salt and bread = comrades). This is an Arabian expression used only between humans to convey strong, loyal and affectionate relationships - based on sharing meals together - hence, full trust. The term being used here in association with a piece of furniture is unconventional but rather metaphoric and highly symbolic.



It gains meaning through its use and through its involvement in the daily life of the family. The house itself may be a masterpiece by a famous *mu'alleem*. But to the owner, when he receives it, it is the essential institution of his and his family's life and identity. As if it loses its status as a solid building or an alien sphere to become life itself to the family that occupies and uses it. The house then becomes as part of the body of its owner so that we can experience in material existence of that house the physical presence of its owner. It becomes home when identities of person and place overlap.

People's capacity to relate intimately to a certain place in the world is what Heidegger saw as the foundation of dwelling, which is an act of affirming our own existence<sup>16</sup>. The task of making something that could be called Home is not a task that man can avoid, as Heidegger puts it: "*I am, therefore, I must dwell.*"<sup>17</sup> Human lives depend upon how people are able to dwell, where dwelling means more than a rational, utilitarian act such as merely occupying a building. But as said earlier, a building will remain outwith man, until he transforms it and incorporates it into his own existence:

We rarely moved from one house to another, mainly because few of us had the financial means of doing so. But when I got married, I rented a place from *el-sheikh Abu al-Ḥamāyil* who owned a large number of apartment buildings in Jeddah. My father - may God bestow His mercy upon him - did not have a house big enough for all of us at the time. Anyway, when I first entered the place, I could see and smell the previous tenant in every room in the house, to the extent that I used to joke with my wife by calling his name every now and then as if he stayed with us. So I went ahead and began covering the traces of the previous family by repainting the house. Not that the house needed renovation, or that I wanted to impress *Abu al-Ḥamāyil*, I only felt that I was living with other people in my own house, as if I was paying the rent for myself and the spirits of the old tenants. It took me about five months before I could forget these spirits and faces. Oh, there is nothing like having your own house. Just like that, you enter your house and you find everything you touch and see feels familiar, even if you are entering it for the first time, even if you did not build it yourself but it was built for you. ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

---

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, 1962. *Passim*.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language and Thought*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. 54.

A comfortable state of habitation cannot be instantly achieved. One is seldom immediately at home in a new place<sup>18</sup>. In the above statement, it is shown that though one may possess the legal occupation of the house, this does not necessarily mean that it will belong to one in spirit, at least not until united with us through the process of incorporation. In this case an attempted transformation is represented by an act of personalization in repainting the house in order to conquer a foreign presence and impose familiarity on one's own terms. (Some men in Ḥedjāz were criticized for having the sinister ability to make themselves at home anywhere. It is considered to be virtually impossible to feel at home anywhere unless "*a lack of sensitive feelings and ignorance are characteristics of those men.*"<sup>19</sup>)

Therefore, the time factor is an integral part of the processes of transformation and incorporation, simply because they occur over and in time. One of the major qualities of home lies in its continuity and accumulation of histories and memories. Furthermore, these processes are time-bound which means that their meaning, nature and probability of enactment can change with the resident's own changing life-stage, and their meaning, nature and occurrence can change with social and cultural change. Hence, people are linked to homes through dynamic changing processes as discussed in later chapters.

The time factor and its effect of the process of transformation and incorporation of a place into one's own entity was also evident in the traditional Ḥedjāzī phenomenon where by the house under construction carries the name of its *mu'allem* until it is completed. I believe that because of the presence of the *mu'allem* and his team on the building-site for a period of at least two years, every stone in the building was moulded with the spirits of the building team, until the owner occupied the place and began accommodating his own presence into the place. This was evident in *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin's following statement in which he expressed the integration between a *mu'allem* and the stones and debris of a building through the course of time:

---

<sup>18</sup> When asked how would they feel in a hotel room, the answer of members of the 'Afif family was that they did not have such feelings as the presence of the 'spirits' of the former guest. To them the hotel is so public that it belongs to everybody equally as a term residence and that nobody stays in a hotel long enough to leave a 'spiritual' trace.

<sup>19</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 9, 1990.

... do not tell me that you are a *mi 'mārī* [an architect] unless you tell me first that you have touched these stones, carried them, felt their weight and your face was covered with their dust and debris. (*Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

As we see in chapter one, King Abdul Azīz attacked Ḥedjāz in 1922 AD/1342 AH and people from Makkah left their city for Jeddah where they sheltered with relatives, friends or whomever invited them to live in their homes. Almost all of the houses of Jeddah had a family from Makkah lodging with the original occupiers. Some recollections of this period point to the time when the visitors left to go back to Makkah and the host families felt the presence of their guests long after they had left. The rooms in which the guests had stayed had lost their old familiarity and nothing in them seemed the same. The still-felt presence of their departed guests and the accompanying feelings of estrangement obliged some of these families to repaint the rooms or even to change some of the simple furniture. It seems that the casual or unconscious transformation of these rooms in their hosts' houses during the course of their relatively lengthy stay resulted in the incorporation of the guests in the changed identity.

In some instances, there is no need for any act of personalization or process of transformation to sustain the process of incorporation, as in the case, for example of visiting a friend's house. Since the friend's house would not be considered one's home or an extension of oneself, there is no need for it to satisfy one's own values of habitation except in a general sense; rather it is a secondary level of habitation within the context of a social relationship, where the process of incorporation will involve a relationship with the friend's being-in-extension and probably have a vicarious element to satisfy. This is an unconscious process of familiarization leading to contentment in, and attachment to a place (the friend's home). Although this can take some time to complete and before the atmosphere of the home becomes entirely warm and intimate.

...for example, if I came to you as a guest, and suppose that - may God forbid - I did not feel comfortable in your place, not because of you, by God no, but because of the place itself! In that case you would find me praying to God for the moment I can leave. I can not extend my feet over the couch nor can I lay my back on the sofa as I would wish. But I can go to another house, and feel exactly as if I am in my own place...Only God knows why. I agree that the man [the host] plays a

part in this, but I assure you that the place itself will play a much stronger role<sup>20</sup>.

If my best friend moved to another house, and I went there as a visitor and happened not to feel comfortable in the place, I will feel exactly the same about wishing to leave as soon as possible. After three or four visits I may feel comfortable in the place...But hey, lend me your ears and open your eyes. I am not the only crazy old man who thinks this way in the country...Those of my age or those of us who were raised together in the same neighbourhood will say exactly the same and you can ask 'amak [your uncle] Aḥmad and 'amak Ḥusain [elderly neighbours who were present]. We loved each other in spite of our houses, not because of them. ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

It was also stated that some houses or places had *wedjīh kāliḥah* (dull and un-welcoming faces). With such places, only stones and wood, or the material elements of the house were what was noticed, unlike the other, more welcoming houses in which the spiritual aspects of the house were the dominant characteristics, along with respect, comfort, generosity and the evident happiness of the host family. These feelings could be explained in terms consistent with those referred to above: what is really happening is that these 'un-welcoming faces' or the walls of the house offended the informant sensibilities and so constricted his access to the spiritual heart of the place. His attention was then engaged by irrelevant and insignificant details of the structure<sup>21</sup> to ward off and divert his mind from imaginings about what he referred to as the un-welcoming faces looking at him.

Furthermore, it was argued by some family members that not all the houses of Ḥedjāz are the same. Only an outsider would think that they are similar. They believe that every room in every house was different. This, they confirmed, had nothing to do

---

<sup>20</sup> Incidentally, similar observations were reported by Clare Cooper: "*most of us have had an experience of moving from one house to another, and finding the new abode initially strange, un-welcoming, perhaps even hostile. But with time, we get used to the new house and its quirks, and it seems almost as though it gets used to us; we can relax when we return to it, put our feet up, become ourselves.*" See Cooper, Clare. "The house as Symbol of the Self." *Environmental Psychology: People and Their Physical Settings*. Ed. Harlod M. Proshansky, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976. 436.

<sup>21</sup> This could have been justified if it were narrated by one of the *mu'allemin*. As builders, they are by virtue of this inclined to see those elements of professional interest as the dominant ones in any place they enter.

with "areas and meters or wooden beams and wall plasters,"<sup>22</sup> but the difference lies in the *roaḥ* and *rīg al-maḥil* (the spirit, ambience or aura of the house). They also believed in 'happy' houses and 'sad' houses "...there are big *sarāiyyāt* (palaces) which are in fact poor places that generate only sadness," as *mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍāqah* asserted. It is not only due to the occupants of the house. Each house and each room has a *wadjh* and *rīg* (face, ambience or flavour). Upon entering one of the big houses, for example, we may feel that the 'face' of the house is *kāliḥ* (dim) as if it looks back at us as unwelcome visitors, or it may be just the opposite. Some *mu'alleṃīn* claimed that some of the houses they built themselves ended up with *wedjīh kāliḥah* and that every house they built had a different face.

"To form a friendship with the place or with these faces"<sup>23</sup> is a way of expressing comfort in a certain place, both in the physical meaning of the term and through being in sympathy with its character. What is meant is being able to accommodate oneself physically and spiritually within the atmosphere of the place. And as such, one is able to strengthen one's bond with the place, to become a familiar 'relative' and to become embodied with the personality of the place<sup>24</sup>. In company, one must dress, talk, act and appear in a certain manner, but to be fully 'at home' means relaxation of all this. In other words, individuals need to be different people at different times and places. Home, however, because of its total familiarity, provides people with an easy atmosphere where the 'presented self' can be dropped and where the individual can be totally himself and at ease (i.e., "lie on the couch or stretch out one's legs"). The notion of being in unfamiliar company or being watched - like the one described above - excites feelings of unease, attentiveness and self-consciousness which are absent when at home, for home is the place for relief and rest from unwanted and unfamiliar contacts.

---

<sup>22</sup> 'Afīf family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990.

<sup>23</sup> 'Afīf family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990.

<sup>24</sup> Failure to achieve this friendly relationship does not necessarily mean moving away from the place. If our spirit did not 'agree' with the spirit of the place, we can still be able to gradually feel content with the place without compromising some of our spirituality so as to correspond to the spirit of the place. This adaptation, which in most cases is encouraged by external factors like the price of the house for example or the views, could take time. Only the time factor can decide whether it is possible to continue the compromise or further changing and moulding would be required.



A number of conclusions could be drawn from such a statement concerning the house as a representation of self. The fact that large palaces can look sad and poor depending on whose occupying them may vindicate this image. If everything in the house is incorporated within the extended being of its occupants and is a reflection of their general character, then the interior of the house must be the closest representation one can have of the owner's self. This might well include the exterior of the house depending on the extent of the occupiers' influence. Unsuccessful habitation and embodiment is, ultimately, alienation for both owner and visitor. Similarly, the extent of the habitation process is seen in Bachelard's description of home as an extension of a suit of clothes, a protection from the outside world, as well as a representation of the inhabitant to that world and should, therefore, be well-fitted to the owner<sup>25</sup>.

As people settle down in a certain house, and their living spaces evolve through time into architectural environments and expressions of their nature, there should develop a corresponding spiritual atmosphere in which to live. This leads us to the examination of the Ḥedjāzī perceptions of the interior and exterior of 'home' whatever they considered it to be, whether a house, *ḥāra*, market, city or the whole of Ḥedjāz. While home is seen as the beginning and the end (life and death), the social life of the individual (especially men) seems to fill the in-between. This active human effort in relation to the socio-spiritual and the physical environment is an integral step in a successful completion of the dwelling process. According to Heidegger, dwelling involves a wish to care for and preserve things, people and events which join to make the place where one chooses to live<sup>26</sup>.

Traditional Ḥedjāzī home-owners expected a 'good' house to go beyond sound structure for a house must be 'good from inside and outside.' Good from the inside when one have successfully chosen a wife from a good family, raised a loving, caring, well-mannered and well-behaved family, in accordance with the habits, norms and traditions of the society. *"Your wife's good cooking is not a guarantee that your*

---

<sup>25</sup> See Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Space. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969. (First Published in 1958). *Passim*.

<sup>26</sup> Heidegger, Martin. The Basic Problems of Phenomenology. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. USA: Indiana University Press, 1982. (Published in German as "Die Grund probleme der Phänomenologie," by Vittorio Klostermann, 1975). 115.



*stomach will be in good shape.*"<sup>27</sup> Similarly, her ability to keep the whole house running smoothly, have no trouble with servants or with children, determines one's gains and extent of achievement of the full benefits of home. A child we can be proud of is a child who grew up with a good home life and with a sincere family love.

I was advised by the elderly members of one family to invest a lot of time, money and energy into the enjoyment of my family and of my house, because family happiness and love can not be taken for granted or be enforced, it must be earned. I was also told that the secret of their successful homes lies in their daily meetings [rituals] with all members of the family. This was referred to by one of my informant's as '*al-jabhah al-jowāniyyah*' (the internal world or frontier)<sup>28</sup>. This internal world could be achieved when one's home can satisfy everyone's needs in a different way. It is then when home can be synonymous with: marriage, love, birth, children, families, life and death (Fig. 8.2.).

The Prophet (God's peace and blessings be upon Him) said that happiness comes from four: a good wife, a spacious home, a good neighbour, and a good mount<sup>29</sup>. Thinking of the components of a successful internal world, one can find that the first two (good wife and spacious home) are essential for *al-doniyyāh al-jowāniyyah*, while the second two are essential for *al-doniyyāh al-barrāniyyah* (external world/frontier). ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

*Al-doniyyāh al-barrāniyyah* (Fig. 8.3.) is work, fatigue, trade, neighbours, relatives, reputation, love and care. Thus, a good house from the outside is achieved when one can successfully choose a suitable neighbourhood that is socially coherent (e.g., homogeneous social classes), and maintain a respectful and friendly relationship with the neighbours. Accordingly, we can not live happily even if we were able to achieve the best family relationship in itself without having this relationship outside

---

<sup>27</sup> 'Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990.

<sup>28</sup> I later modified this term to '*al-doniyyāh al-jowāniyyah*' (the internal world) and its opposite '*al-doniyyāh al-barrāniyyah*' (the external world). Using these two terms to distinguish between the life inside the house and life outside found strong support from almost all the interviewees that they began to use them to explain to me how each of these 'worlds' were lived by them. Quotations from the interviewed households and *mu'allemin* testifies to this notion.

<sup>29</sup> An authentic Prophetic *Ḥadīth* narrated here by an elderly from the 'Afif family in its informal format.

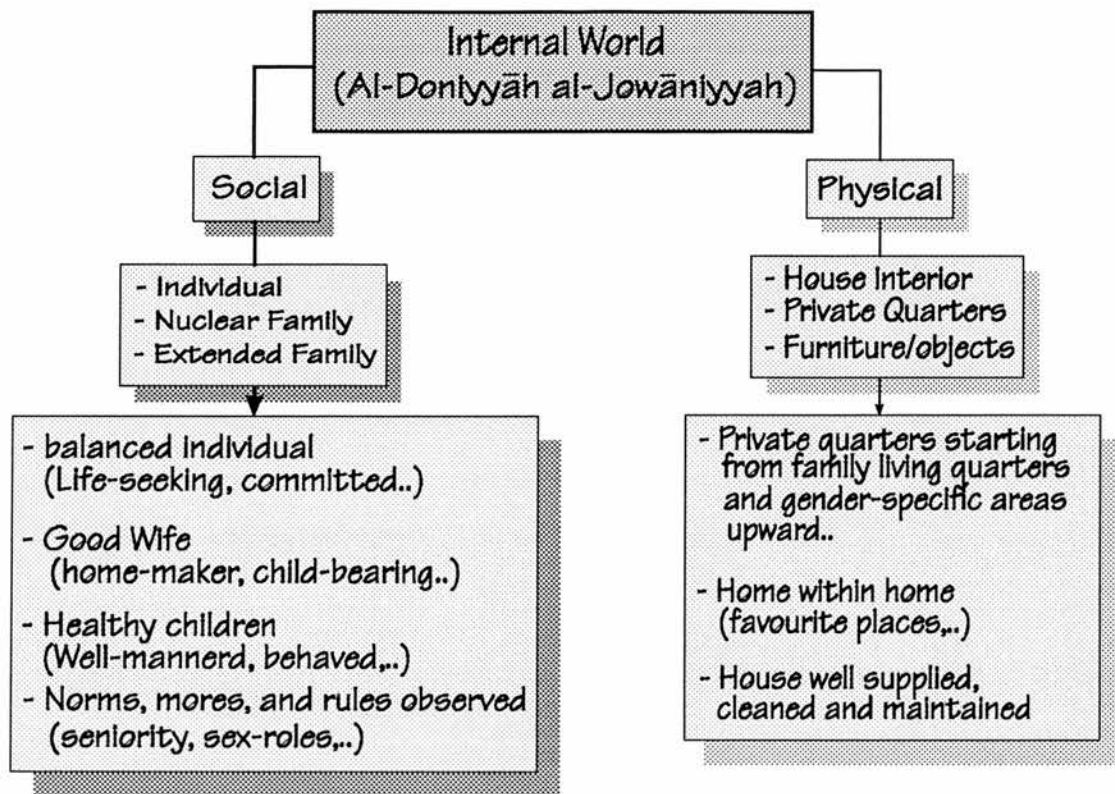


Fig. 8.2. Components of the 'internal world' of home.

the house, that is if we do not extend ourselves to the neighbourhood<sup>30</sup>. Achieving the one without the other would mean one of two things: we must either be loath to leave our own houses to face the world outside, or we must hide in our houses most of the time "like women, which is impossible in Ḥedjāz."<sup>31</sup> Why? Because we are not happy with our relations with the rest of the ḥāra. In either case "you will not last for long. Better you moved somewhere else. An old Ḥedjāzī proverb says: 'Do not enter a paradise that does not have people.' The pleasure of food is lost if the meal is not

<sup>30</sup> There is a Ḥedjāzī traditional saying by the mother in the day her daughter leaves the family house to her husband's: "If he was in your house, his is your husband, but if he was not, he is married to somebody else." This advice means that the wife should not ask her husband about his whereabouts, how and with whom for it is obvious that he has another obligation outside the house - as serious as marriage - with the other members of the community. See Al-Maghrabī, M. 'Alī. *Malāmiḥ el Ḥayāh el Edjtimā'iyyah Fī el Ḥedjāz*. [(Arabic) "Aspects of the Ḥedjāzī social life."] Jeddah: Tihamah, 1982. 35.

<sup>31</sup> This was mostly due to certain social norms associated with the house. The home in Ḥedjāz, in its very nature, is intended to shield from danger; it is in origin a hiding place, a shelter for the defenceless (i.e., women and children). For men to stay in it most of their time is in no way conducive to the development of courage and dignity.

shared."<sup>32</sup> Mu'allem Şaḍaḡah Karkāchin remarked that:

One's home is truly a place of refuge and relief from the pressures of life. One needs social relations to live a decent social life full of good qualities, constantly staying at home does not do it. A healthy and well-balanced man has his position in life and at his home, and finds happiness in both. One simply cannot survive alone. (Mu'allem Şaḍaḡah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 11, 1990).

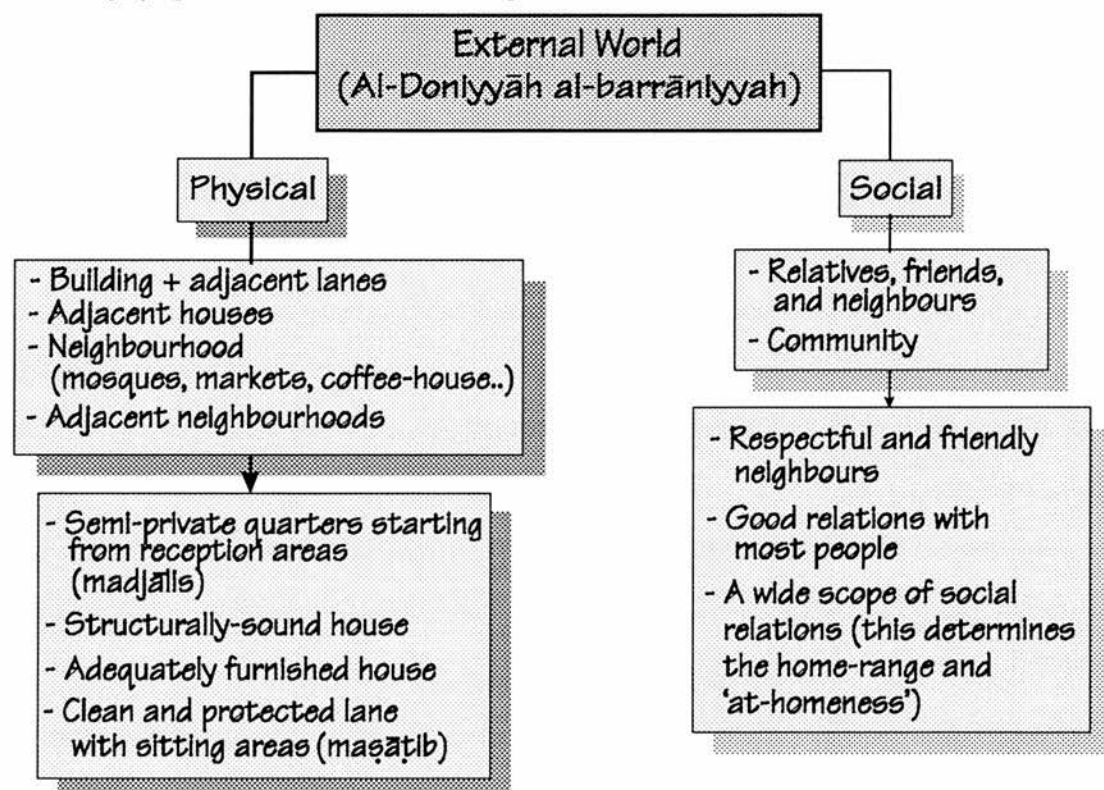


Fig. 8.3. Components of the 'external world' of home.

The importance given to the family<sup>33</sup> as a fundamental social unit in the Hedjāzī community required appropriate attention to provide for its physical comforts, psychological security and an uninterrupted peaceful environment for its residents. The suggestion of having a good internal world indicates that one's personal and familial situation must be stabilized and ordered before a sense of extended community

<sup>32</sup> Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990.

<sup>33</sup> Slaves and servants were included in the family and were referred to in several occasion as 'legitimate' members of a household. Most travellers' recollection of this period confirms the fact that slaves, maids and servants were dressed, and more often, treated as family members as far as accommodation was concerned. See Hurgonje, Snouck C. *Mekkah in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*. Trans. J. H. Monahan. London: Luzac and Co., 1931. *Passim*.

(external world) could be established. These are not necessarily the homes in which there is the most love. Along with love, or even as a substitute for it, must go a sense of home, a willingness to enjoy the kind of companionship it provides. At the same time, there is a belief that women are not necessarily good home-makers and it is the man's responsibility to make it work or to destroy the home completely if he did not "play it right." However, the significance of the role played by a woman at the centre of the home was stressed in many occasions:

...but you know what's much more important than a *sarāiyāh* [mansion] with 70 rooms and 70 servants? A good wife....All these are worthless 'izā māfī fī el- 'āiyyah, mīn aḥoṭ yaddī 'alīh kol laīllah [if there is no body in the family/clan that I can lean my head on every night]. (Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

#### 8.1.1.1. The internal world: within the boundaries of the house

Within the home, the process of incorporation is a continuous one. 'Hiding-places' are chosen by individuals within the house which most satisfy private needs, wants and wishes of 'home,' places where embodiment of self and place is most felt. Naturally they vary from one individual to the other. This 'sub-home' is not necessarily the individual's own territory (i.e., one's private chambers). According to my respondents, this place may very well be the bathroom! Whatever this place may be it is considered home within home, a sort of last retreat before one can withdraw to his own home in the head..."the ideal home," as the traditional proverb suggests.

The main reason for choosing this sub-home is to find a retreat. It is not any random place in the main house but a haven of privacy, a place where one can shut out all the world, and within which one can seek further retreat into one's ideal home. These sub-homes are centres for the exercise of the imagination, places around which one can weave one's own fictions, pockets of freedom and self-growth (an example of such homes was evident throughout the interviews with the elderly when they tried to preserve their individual sense of comfort in the presence of a large number of grandsons).

In one example, the *rowshān*, because of its range of possibilities, was used as a metaphor for home as a whole, real and imaginative: "solitude is worship and my

rowshān was my *zāwiyyah* [small mosque], my living room, my dining room, my bed room, my tea balcony... my rest," said an elderly from the 'Afīf family. In this home within home, the individual is able to set up a substitute reality where most unwanted elements can be excluded and a more convenient replacement created. What matters is whether the individual uses this home, this territory between oneself and one's world, to engage the real self on the one hand with the real world on the other, or to escape from both. The latter seems to be the case with the elderly of Ḥedjāz in their present homes:

When life turns its back, I sit down by myself on this sofa, look through the window, and let the door of the *khardjah* [terrace] say to the door of the *saṭūḥ* [roof-top], he who comes, comes and he who leaves, leaves [come what may, I do not care]. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍaqaḥ* Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

There is another very important social consideration associated with residence. In the Arab culture the boundaries of the house mark its owners' domain of total authority over everything and everybody, but at the same time the area of his greatest responsibility. While a guest was obliged to recognize the owner's supreme authority, the owner was obliged to extend his respect and protection to his guests. The announcement that "someone is at the threshold of the door" was the signal for the family to be on 'full alert' in the service of the visitor.

The vital emphasis on the home as domain and sanctuary was itself to the general human impulse to hospitality, but this is especially significant in Arab culture. The customs of hospitality became institutionalized in the ancient periods of tribal organisation when the status of a guest was held to be sacred in an Arab's tent and was governed by the laws and usages of hospitality, as we see later in this chapter. In the past Arabian days, if the domestic integrity and laws of hospitality were not observed by the owner of the house, the visitor would have claimed it with his sword. In order to illustrate the social significance of a man's house, whether to its owner or his guest - domain or sanctuary - I will refer to an example from Islamic history:

When Prophet Muḥammad (PBBH) entered Makkah in the year 8 AH/630 AD as a conqueror, he announced that "he who enters the house of Abū Sufiān (the leader of the prominent *Qūraiyyish* tribe and one of its nobilities) shall be safe." Then he added that "he who enters his own house shall be safe." Historical records show that



those who refused to do so were attacked and killed. In the first part of the Prophet's announcement there was a statement to the effect that the Muslim army would recognize Abu Sufiān as the respected leader of the *Qūraiyyish* tribe of Makkah and that in deference to this, whoever entered his house would be awarded the respect due to Abū Sufiān (although he was the leader of *Qūraiyyish's* infidels) and treated accordingly. They were to be granted honourable asylum. In the second part of His announcement where the promise of safety under curfew was extended to all the residents of Makkah, He recognised the house as a kind of secular shrine of peace where no fighting or killing must take place. The house was then 'elevated' to a level of sacredness comparable with that of a holy place or sanctuary (again where no fighting or killing should take place), although without any religious implications.

What the traditional Ḥedjāzīs treated as the norms and conventions of hospitality was actually an extension of an ancient Arabian custom, even before Islam, where the bedouins of the desert had the habit of not asking a guest any question before the third day of his stay, even if he was a reputed enemy of the hosting tribe. This again stems from the ethos that envelops 'home'; it is the moral power of 'home' manifest in the strict rules of hospitality. The subject of hospitality requires special attention to be paid to its associated issues like shelter, privacy, security, identity, social status, domestic comfort and responsibility, and their relationship to the perception and design of the Ḥedjāzī house.

Being inside the house in traditional Ḥedjāz would not only mean protection from the elements, but from any other disturbances, physical and social. The owner of the house had the full responsibility of ensuring the guest's comfort and protection, to make him feel "as if he was at his own home." The host's home must socially 'fit' the guest; his sense of importance is catered to by the host's acceptance of his status, so that the guest should feel as a 'visitor of distinction.' Instead of being 'on his own grounds,' the host was expected to act in the exact opposite way by submitting this privilege to his guest as a gesture of respect. The appreciation and respect of the other members of the community of this fact is associated with their respect to the house owner as it was the case in the Prophet's announcement.

[The habit of shouting our names loud at the doors or knocking] is a matter of respect to the man we are going to visit. By doing this we allow the owner of the house to make up his mind, prepare himself



according to the visitors' status. For example if the visitor's voice is the familiar voice of a close neighbour, the owner would not have to change his clothing as for a formal visitor. Of course, when you visited someone you normally knew their eating and sleeping times and their habits in general, so that if they did not answer the door when you knew them not to be ill or absent it could put you into an uncertain situation where you had the feeling that you were either not welcomed or that you had called at an unsuitable time. ('Afīf family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

The visitor's status is considered to be a delicately felt one and it is the duty of the host to provide reassurances. The traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb confirmed this convention in the saying: *lāgīnī walā taghadīnī* (lit. meet me and do not feed me = to receive me well is better than to well-feed me). According to the elderly of Ḥedjāz, because the person waiting at the door seeking admission to the house will feel a sense of awkwardness, the house-owner will feel obliged to dispel this feeling by allowing him access and trying to set him at ease, through sometimes exaggerated hospitality and generosity. This sense of social vulnerability is reflected in the following:

The visitor actually feels that he is going to disturb the rhythm of life taking place inside the host's house. Appreciating this situation, the visitor becomes very sensitive to the slightest gestures or expressions from the owner of the house as to the amount of disturbance his arrival has caused his house. The responsibility of the host to show to the visitor that no disturbance was caused by his visit was considered to be the basic level of hospitality. In the case of less familiar guests or those known to be especially sensitive in such matters, the host will convey to the visitor that "he is as the owner of the house" and that his wishes will be fulfilled in that spirit. This (second) level of ministrations is intended to relieve the visitor's sense of vulnerability and achieve the appropriate level of ease and hospitality. This means that not only will he feel that his presence was especially welcomed by the house owner but that, as a guest, he is in a position to ask for extra things which will be granted by the owner "as if he were in his own home."<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, being a guest in one of the family houses would mean that you are under two claims of responsibility: the first in respecting the general customs

---

<sup>34</sup> Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990.

of Ḥedjāz as applied to guest status; the second in adherence to the particular customs and habits of the host family based on one's experience or prior knowledge of that family. If such guidance were not available, guests were expected to 'read' the social messages - cultural codes and symbols - present in the house as hints to the particular personality of their host (e.g., Qur'ānic scripts on the wall, lack of elaborate decorations or family portraits):

Of course we knew the habits of each other, but we also knew that homes were secrets [secret places] and each family stood on its own in front of God. Some people are conservative and religious, some are liberal and only fellow travellers. All this could be seen in the *madjlis* as if it were written *bil-bonṭ al-'arīḍ* [with large letters on the walls of the room]. ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

It seems that the thought of home evokes sacred feelings that immediately promote a moral influence on everyone within its walls. Once within the confines of the house, a guest should not criticize or show any annoyance with the atmosphere of the house (noise of children, unpleasant odour), nor should he speak or behave towards the owner of the house in the same way they would deal with each other on the street. A formal guest who made himself at home without the consent of the host would be considered to be insensitive: "*a stranger must be courteous*" is a well known Ḥedjāzī proverb defining the behaviour of someone in another's territory.

This was further emphasized by a number of interviewees on several occasions with equal assurance that it had nothing to do with the nature of Ḥedjāzī hospitality, but rather with respect for one another. In one instance, a strong proverb was used to show how conscious they were of this point: "*He who leaves his house, suspends his self respect,*" as he submits that to the will of the host 'to restore it.' In this sense, the home is seen as an area of interaction with the world rather than the expression of the owner's self. Priorities shift back and forth between the wishes of the guest and the customs of the house.

As a representation of the owner's generosity and hospitality, the Ḥedjāzī house manifested a host of physical and social features. The level of decoration and architectural emphasis on the main entrance was actually a language which spoke of the traditional experience of socialization and hospitality. On the social level, the open-door was another way of saying that everybody was welcome there, and, given

the strict need for privacy in Ḥedjāz, was hardly for ventilation purposes. This elaborately-decorated or opened door was an incorporation of the owner's experience of hospitality shared with his community in a silent but very effective and comprehensible language. Though this did not mean that a plain unornamented or closed door would indicate the owner's rejection of his community or that he was inhospitable.

Let us examine once again the habit of leaving the front door of the house opened throughout the day and early evening. This habit expressed the generosity of the house-owner and his ability or willingness to receive, protect and respect whoever was going to pass through this open door to the inside of the house. Such a custom was valued and interpreted by other members of the community as facial expressions and body movements on the part of the house-owner (i.e., an open door = a smiling face or welcoming arms). This habit was also a symbolic 'periodic submission' or even the 'relinquishment' of territory by the owner. This act of erasing or - at least - dissolving one's own boundary and territorial integrity so as to bond with others is the essence of the desire of the individual to enhance group homogeneity for the sake of strengthening the group unity.

In response, other members of the community, even the most outspoken or pre-eminent amongst them, would observe the customs and standards of behaviour incumbent upon them in the circumstances and would enter this symbolically free territory having regard to the appropriate rules of conduct. That is, those of Ḥedjāz in general and those recognizing the particularity of the gesture by the house owner. In this latter sense, visitors were expected to respond to the owners gestures by similar gestures of social concession and to subordinate their own likes, dislikes, habits and so on to that of their host in an unstated mutually respectful exchange. To emphasise the nature of this relationship, an elderly Ḥedjāzī exclaimed that if:

You enter my house like a cat, I will treat you like the lion, like *the king of the place* [emphasized], but when you enter my house and do not treat me as the head, I will treat you like a foot. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

### 8.1.1.2. Sex roles and perception of the internal world

The main purpose of including the woman's point of view at this particular stage in the research is to discriminate between societal perceptions of home-makers. In traditional Ḥedjāz, home-making is a task which society holds the man responsible for achieving, while the failure of home-making is mainly blamed on the woman because she is a home-maker by nature. The man takes the initiatives of building the house, and once its built, he 'submitted' it to his wife. The house was then transmitted to her as the 'guardian' and maintainer of its continuity. The real home - her husband's - is her responsibility even when she is too young to cope with its problems. Naturally, the father's home seems like a safe heaven even though she was required to perform a great deal of domestic tasks. But while men had more choice to remaining unmarried until they felt ready, women had less choice, and in most cases, were taken by surprise with little knowledge of home-making. In general we will notice that the sex of the home-maker is less important than the question of how the home works to the benefit of its occupants and the outside community.

Given the cultural identification of home with women and the actual involvement of women with home-making roles and activities, it is not surprising that women's sense of identity with respect to home typically differs from that of men, especially in a culture of strongly differentiated gender roles as Ḥedjāz<sup>35</sup>. While to most men home is only one of their areas of activity and can find partial fulfilment elsewhere, women see the home as an avenue of self-expression and a reflection of self. Women in Ḥedjāz hardly left the house, especially the elderly ones and the young adults. In Ḥedjāz, the women's position in the house was never questioned (at least not by my female respondents). Girls had an inborn understanding of their role, and an almost superhuman ability to endure hardship and to maintain their own welfare. They knew that they themselves must not change either; they moved smoothly from girlhood to womanhood with the same attitudes as their grandmothers. Home to the Ḥedjāzī woman was almost everything she had, it was her surrounding from birth to death. Most of her day was consumed by the undertaking of domestic tasks. The socially prized woman was the most patient, submissive and inexhaustible labourer. Therefore, most of her time was devoted to the family, and in what remained she was

---

<sup>35</sup> Although living at a home did not always give Ḥedjāzī women a positive sensation of security, because for some home was oppressive and restrictive.

allowed no scope for any other vocation (even if maids or servants were employed). Her sphere was wholly in the home. It was her workshop, her vehicle of expression, but was never thought of as a confinement<sup>36</sup>.

My home was my entire life. It contained all that I could ask for or dream of, my husband made it a complete place. I married very young and he was my father and my whole family. I did not mind his decisions when we got our first house built for us. I told him that I wanted a well-lit and ventilated kitchen and a large living room, because we were a large family. When we moved to the new place, every one went to his apartment with great pleasure, no one said that he did not like his place. Each family organized its place as they desired. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

Women and men invested different meanings in their domestic environment, based on traditional gender identities. Among the women and men interviewed who identify with their homes, women interpreted home and valued domestic objects as symbols of family life, while men saw their houses as signs of personal achievement on behalf of their families and as what they represented in terms of community perception. It must be emphasized, however, that family and home overlapped throughout the interviews with women respondents. Women regarded themselves as the maintainers of home and family, while home was perceived as the family's major symbol of identity.

The physical arrangement of the house's interior was the area least likely to be affected by differences of opinions within the family. As we see in previous chapters, as the family grew older, space in the house became more segmented and specialized. The arrangement of the physical aspects of the home to one's liking is relatively easy within the income group dealt with in the research. But as we saw, home to most of these people was more than just a building; it was a place where people lived together, surrounded by different sets of people on the outside; and people are less easily controlled than things. Therefore, the importance given to the choice of the right combination of people to create the best of homes was vital (to marry a good wife). Happy interaction within the home is not seen as easily achieved,

---

<sup>36</sup> Although it was said in traditional Ḥedjāz that *"a woman leaves her house twice, she leaves her father's house when she is married, and leaves her husband's house when she is buried."* Women went out to visit relatives and parents but not for any sort of participation in public functions or entertainment.



but there are homes where relations between people are harmonious, and it does not seem to matter how many people there are, or how they are related.

The maintenance of the house, however was the main concern of the senior family member who determined and emphasized the general theme of tidiness and cleanness for it was a direct representation of the family in the eyes of the friends, neighbours and relatives. The distribution of domestic tasks in accordance with this theme was the responsibility of the senior female member of the family, who, in turn supervised the work of daughters and daughters-in-law towards the achievement of this goal. This hierarchy and division of labour ensured the continuous maintenance of the house, although sometimes it was the source of internal friction between family members as to their ranks and duties.

I reared my children and supervised the education of my grandchildren. I taught my daughters and my daughters-in-law how to cook and how to be God-fearing wives. No Ḥedjāzī girl sat idle, no Ḥedjāzī girl was spoiled, they all found pleasure and status through serving others. Daughters washed and ironed the clothes of their brothers as well as their own. Girls vied in performing as many tasks as possible when they were content with them. My daughter-in-law was a perfect wife. I could not imagine the house if my son married someone else. It was their place, and they knew how to handle it. We did have problems of 'who does what,' and "why her and not me" and so on, but this was, after all, in my face [my responsibility] and I had to end these clashes before my husband arrived to find a dirty place [house]. They all helped me and one hand does not clap. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

It is clear that within the family itself, the way the members of a household feel towards one another, and towards the home, is more important to home happiness than ties of blood: membership in the family is taken for granted. The extended family tends to have a superiority over the nuclear family because the majority thought that homes are often richer when they include friends, relatives and distant relatives. Although conflicts between relatives existed, they were considered minor compared with the practical and moral improvement their presence brought. It was also emphasized that when there is love between the family members and willingness to live with one another, the question of power and control does not arise. For most of the time it was quite obvious to everybody in the house who had the power and who was in control.



...we used to go out and visit our neighbours and relatives, sometimes alone, but most of the time we had one of the children with us. My mother taught me how to sew but I was not as good at it as my daughter-in-law. She made most of our clothing, including that of my husband. We had problems of jealousy between wives sometimes, but they ended when I settled their feuds. I had to keep a tight control to keep this family together especially when my children grew-up. Every one listened and obeyed me from the youngest to the eldest of my sons and their wives. ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

The daughter-in-law, whose tasks were subordinate to the will of the mother-in-law, and who spoke little in the household, is brought up by her own family to accept the delegated role within the marital household. Therefore, in spite of her early perpetration for such a role, her perception of her father's house is much 'homier' than that of her husband's house, especially in the early years of marriage. Also her perception of the extended family organization is less attractive than that of the nuclear family home, unless she has the power, or rather the permission, to develop her own household in accordance with her ideal image of home.

Such was my entire life: a teacher, a cook, a cleaner, a doctor, a mother and a father. I tried to avoid interference from the children's father as much as I could, because he was very tough. I gave him peace as much as he tried to provide for us, such was the deal [she laughs]. So you see, I tried to give him peace as long as he tried to provide for us. I had my hands full all the time and I loved every minute of it until my husband died and I moved with my children to this new house away from my old neighbourhood. I go out now more than I used to, but I do not enjoy it as much. If you do not live in your own property, you are not living at all. ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

The association of home and women throughout history seems to have been a culturally-independent phenomenon demanded by public opinion, sanctioned by religion and enforced by culture<sup>37</sup>. What seems to distinguish the Ḥedjāzī, however, is that home to her is not only the beginning of life, it is also a place to die, because

---

<sup>37</sup> "A man without a wife is a man without a home" is a proverb found in numerous nomadic cultures (e.g., Arabian tribes). But this woman's position is far from being alone characteristic of the traditional Ḥedjāzī, Arab or Muslim women. All women on earth seem to have a home-making instinct, and in Ḥedjāz they just extended it from their parent's house to their husband's. Many male writers of all periods (e.g., Thomas Marriot, 1759) have described Western women as being associated with domestic tasks and claiming that they are capable of working miracles.

home represents the passage of time; the duties, the pleasures and bitterness of life that will end some day in the same place where she found settlement (when she first moved in with her husband). Because most of the female respondents were among the elderly of Ḥedjāz, the perception of the house seems to be that of retreat and death rather than development and life. This point of view was not totally shared by male respondents as if they expected death somewhere else. This again reinforces the idea of the house as extent of the woman's domain in contrast with that of the man who had a much wider domain.

The association of the internal world of the house with the world of women invokes concepts of femininity and masculinity in Ḥedjāz. Once again we find hints within this context which stress the sensitivity to the house as the female domain which should be given due weight. The sacredness of the Arab/Muslim house or *ḥaram* (inviolable-zone) derives from the presence of women (*ḥarīm*) within its walls. The difference between the family house and that of an unmarried man is this sacredness which *"completes one's religion by getting married"*<sup>38</sup> and which demands privacy and domestic reserve when the women moves in. A bachelor's house brings loneliness along with a sense of mastery and independence, but his house is lacking a purpose and future until he sanctifies it with the presence of a woman and turns his house into a home. Otherwise it is going to remain a house with a number of rooms which are kept neat and comfortable.

The existence of sub-homes within homes was also evident from a woman's point of view. It seems they existed for them at a young age before they got married. In these hiding places, a girl was able to practise the skills she would need to survive as a wife and to set her own standards of the ideal home. Such homes are imaginary modifications from the parental home, eliminating all the complexities and shortcomings and enhanced by the girl's perspective of an ideal home. It also seems that the real homes of these future wives started in their imaginations and were given substance in the real life situation, at least as much as they possibly could be. What matters here is that these sessions of imagination or day-dreaming seem to have taken place in special corners of the house, the ones that seemed closer to the girl's heart or perhaps closer to her ideal home:

---

<sup>38</sup> An Authentic Prophetic Ḥadīth.

My father's house..that was a dream I could not dream again, but I thank God for everything. I Thank God that my life with my husband, my children and the children of my children was a very good one. But that house could have been better if I shaped it to my heart's desires. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

The emphasis on the ownership of the house - "*if you do not live in your own property, you are not living at all*" - revealed some aspects about home as a commodity. The house as a private property is tied to notions of privacy, freedom of decision and movement and not mainly of individuality and self-actualization. Later, towards the beginning of the 20th century, the ownership of houses gained the position of being a status symbol for the family.

Pride is felt by those who have property and money, especially property since it is visible. As a matter of fact, men are measured by their accomplishments and good deeds, but money dresses men with honour and status while properties clothes them with beauty. (M. Şāliḥ Bā 'ishin)<sup>39</sup>.

This view I found to be common among both sexes, although it is more of an issue when it comes to the male's identity as an independent and dignified member of the community. In the case of rented accommodations, incorporating the house within one's own existence and being were referred to only where a relatively 'sufficient' period of time applied and it seems that private ownership of the house brought it closer to the family's heart as fully 'theirs,' and that rented accommodations always lacked this 'fullness'; it was an incomplete and transient home, not worth any sentimental investment. A purpose-built house, owned by the family, was to the *Ḥedjāzīyyīn*, the first real milestone on their home-making journey (and, apparently, still is).

### 8.1.1.3 The external world and unity of the parts

...every house in the town was mine, we were all one big family. If someone was happy, we were all happy, and if someone was sad, we were all sad, and in both cases we would be with him...If someone

---

<sup>39</sup> Bā 'ishin, M. Şāliḥ. "Personal Autobiography." Cited in *Mawso'at Tārīkh Madīnat Jeddah*. [(Arabic) "The Encyclopedia of the History of the City of Jeddah."] 'Abdul Quddūs al-Anṣārī. Cairo: Dār Miṣr Lilḥabā'ah, 1982 AD/1402 AH, vol.1. 279.

wanted to build a house and he did not own a piece of land to build on, one of his relatives or friends would lend him the land to build on for a nominal fee called *hiker*, which was less than three or four Riyals annually. We had cases where roof-tops were rented to a friend and built on as an extension to the house, and we had houses where each floor was rented to a different family but where the name of the original owner was maintained. (*Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍaqaḥ 'Olaimī*, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

In the same way that the house becomes incorporated with the self, so will other environments, landscapes and places. These are multifaceted in character, projecting a range of the world from tangible to those abstractions such of home-atmosphere, spirit and sacredness. In the traditional Ḥedjāzī neighbourhood, people's interaction with their local environment represented personal and collective struggles and accomplishments, responsibilities and changes, and these become associated with the physical settings in which they occurred and charged them with purely local meanings. These meanings seem to be so powerful that they predominate over the physical image of the place. They are places of origins, where one knows others and is known to others, and hence they are where one comes from and they are one's own.

Furthermore, the metaphor of Ḥedjāz as "one big family" implies that of the Ḥedjāz as one home. The need to establish a home beyond the individual home is seen to be evident. This home is achieved by 'expanding' the individual home to include the rest of Ḥedjāz if the owner wishes to do so. This phenomenon requires the establishment of common mores and customs among members of the community to give meaning and purpose to the world around.

There is, then, a prerequisite to this expansion which is the willingness of the individual Ḥedjāzī to assimilate the features of the world outside into his home and the concomitant acceptance of the rest of the community within his domain. But to absorb the greater environment on his own terms was, I was told, beyond the power of an individual in Ḥedjāz. Since even the structure of an individual's home influenced perceptions of the abstract landscape, the larger group rather than individual's values was the main determinant of its identity.

Although people tended to treat their homes as separate from the world and as a private preserve, there was often a countervailing and balancing tendency to see

home as a physical reflection of its owner and therefore an involuntary self-revelation in the eyes of the world. We say involuntary in view of the great emphasis on the privacy of life in Ḥedjāz and the society's high awareness, and inordinate sensitivity to public reputation and image (which was believed to be always at stake). Relations were in public conceived of as self-revealing, to an extent that one's personal appearance would reveal clues to one's feelings and hidden emotions. Within such a close-knit society, and with what would seem an invasion of privacy, homes and lives were shared and problems were revealed and discussed beyond control, all of which helped Ḥedjāz to emerge as one large family. The Ḥedjāzīs were able to create physical boundaries that excluded others, but they hardly had the ability to control information about themselves.

As we see in chapter seven, establishing an appropriate place in the universe, a home, from a traditional Ḥedjāzī perspective required the involvement of the whole group to achieve the initial links with the land. By simply abiding by the socially-accepted norms, values and rules of behaviour of the group, the owner of a prospect house guaranteed himself initial acceptability in the community. To prove his attitudes towards the common beliefs of the community, he had to reflect them: *"He who have two eyes and a head, does what people do."*<sup>40</sup> The house then became a mirror of the individual's intentions. Through his means, the house owner would try to build his home to be as close as possible to the prevailing ideas of the time.

To live in a neighbourhood, is to be more than just a figure, a drop of water in the sea. 'Me' is much less than 'us,' its at least 4000 people less and it does not fill a stomach or brightens a heart in Ḥedjāz. Our elders knew that even death with a group is mercy. 'Me and 'us' are two different worlds: I pray God to protect me from the first and its selfishness, and help me to fulfil the second and its relations and obligations. One must be associated in a number of ways with others, grouped together in the neighbourhood functions and affairs. We in the *ḥāra* mixed with each other so much that we always knew what others did and do and what their problems were. The family and relatives alone do not in themselves constitute a community; a community relation is something much larger. Although one must have his private house to be separate in, but one must also have a bigger house to be together in with other fellow men. The mosque, the market, the street,

---

<sup>40</sup> A traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb which means that if someone wants to belong to a group he must observe and comprehend their norms, habits, and values.



the *qahwa*; all these are very important in Ḥedjāz, may be as important as the *madjlis* [sitting-room] itself. The customs and traditions are clear and open, observe them and you will find how easily love, dignity and honour could be won...he who has a head with two eyes must follow the ways of the people. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

From the house to the street, one crosses a succession of thresholds, each representing a degree of relationship. When one leaves the house and enters the outer domain of Home, one leaves one's intimate relatives to be among friends, neighbours and acquaintances and still be at home. One was always at home as long as one maintained the right set of relationships with the world. For in a community such as this, no matter how much one tried to submerge oneself, one was still a part of this world, or as I was told "*he who abides with people for forty days becomes one of them.*"<sup>41</sup> Home in this sense was a milieu not defined by one's private surroundings, but by the world shared in common by all of the concerned characters; family, relatives, friends and neighbours.

These houses, forming a neighbourhood and a community, appear as both places and processes through which a person understands and accepts a position in the community and the broader world. Traditional Ḥedjāzīs are more 'at home' when they find an acceptable place in the network of social relations and social order of the local community. As they grow older, this circle is widened by more experience of more places. Hence, the feeling of being 'at home' was achieved on a wider scale that could include a whole city. Home is then a state of 'rootedness' in place, grounded in the familiarity of knowing and being known in a particular place.

The Ḥedjāzī culture placed great emphasis on personal image and reputation in the eyes of the community. To gain an accepted place or 'home' within the community, one had to satisfy a certain image or 'persona.' One had to be sufficiently 'at home' with oneself to adjust his self-image to the common expressions of social behaviours with which one was confronted. In other words, an individual had to be at home with himself first in order to convey the proper self-image he desired. In order to gain the 'us' quality of the neighbourhood, one must adjust and modify oneself-image according to the reciprocal attitudes of the other members of the community.

---

<sup>41</sup> A traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb.



Achieving this is the first step towards being at home with the society. To the child, for example, home is limited to the structure of the house and the domestic group. During the early adolescence one extends one's home into a social world beyond the house, but one's orientation is largely confined within the social world of the *ḥāra*. As one grows older, one's ability to present oneself to a wider range of communities and neighbourhoods within the town increases, resulting in the reinforcement of being at home in almost all the parts of this town. 'At homeness' then gains new values and meanings throughout and the evident need to adhere or adapt to wider and more complex social and moral configurations is a continuing priority.

In this society, where social cohesion depends to a great extent, upon a commonly-accepted codes of public behaviour, social relations and values are highly collective and contributions to or participation in group projects or activities tend to be appropriately acknowledged in terms of enhanced social standing (prestige) while conscious personal consumption or self-glorifying display tend to be stigmatized. Under these conditions houses are conceived of and valued primarily as shelters and places of group activity. The use of the house for personal display tends to lower, not enhance the social status of the individual<sup>42</sup>. Accordingly, this individual will not only lose his acceptance and status within the community, he will lose his 'at homeness' within the neighbourhood as a result of losing the first. Identities are known and social self-presentation depends on the individual's membership of the group.

Those who came with the radical changes and unconventional ideas, and those who extravagantly decorated their houses and tried to over emphasize their appearances were not, in most cases, well-known *Ḥedjāzīs*. Although in some other cases, prominent *Ḥedjāzī* families brought builders and craftsmen from India, Syria and Egypt to build their houses. In general, they wanted to be known by their material wealth explicitly displayed on the faces of their houses:

---

<sup>42</sup> The expression of one person's gain through an elaborate house, or façade would be seen as another's loss, hence houses had to look more or less the same. Even displays of territoriality-demarcations involved a more 'political' set of relationships between family and neighbours and the larger community. In a territorial image of home, the force that controlled family display of identity was primarily the practical necessity to remain on good terms with one's neighbours, and not to invoke evil eyes.

The original and authentic Ḥedjāzī family did not need to go through all this showing-off, everybody knew them very well and we all knew how much they were worth from the size of their warehouses, shops and their merchandise at sea. They also were very modest about showing any difference between their houses and ours, although some of the younger ones did, but no one I knew was offended. Between us, the ordinary Ḥedjāzīs, if one of us started spending large sums of money on the façades of his house, people became offended, and he was condemned for trying to be different. It was as if belonging to us [not so rich] did not suit him, and he was immediately shunned by the *ḥāra*. Real men were judged by their accomplishments on behalf of others, their morality and ability to serve their community, not by how much wealth their trade brought them. You could have been the richest in Ḥedjāz and happened to be an arrogant type of man, isolating yourself from the community by showing your unwillingness to help others and mix with them. As such, people would know nothing about you, but that you were very rich and that all your money and your beautiful *sarāiyāh* [big-house] would not capture the heart of the youngest of our children. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

Which then is best? - he that layeth his foundation on piety to God and His good pleasure? - or he that layeth his foundation on an undermined sand-cliff ready to crumble to pieces? And it doth crumble to pieces with him, into the fire of Hell. And God guideth not people that do wrong. (*Qur'ān, Sūra IX: 109, Taubah*).

As discussed in chapter seven, *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah recited this verse of the holy Qur'ān to further emphasize the importance of the purity of sentiments and motives of home-owners. The main goal of building a house, he emphasized, is to shelter oneself and family and not to use it to advertise one's superiority over others. Instead, this earthly house should be a way of reaching the heavenly house. In the holy Qur'ān, man was not asked to build houses, but was promised a house in Paradise if he helped his neighbours, accommodated homeless people or built mosques:

The houses that we were building represent the shade of the tree that Prophet Muḥammad (PBBH) meant in his *Ḥadīth*: "This world and myself are like a wayfarer who sat under a tree in a hot summer day, and then left [died] the tree [life] when it was no longer needed<sup>43</sup>. This life is not permanent, and therefore, we must use these earthly-houses to obey God. By helping each other to pass this life as easily

---

<sup>43</sup> An authentic Prophetic *Ḥadīth*, narrated here in its informal format.

as possible, we - if God Almighty wish - will gain the dignity of the heavenly house. We all strived to gain this heavenly house...but as you know money corrupted the souls of many people, everything that angers God seems to be caused by money. (*Mu'alleme Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 14, 1990).

Then the *mu'alleme* recited the following verse from the same chapter of the Qur'ān:

Say: If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred; the wealth that ye have gained; the commerce in which ye fear a decline; or the dwellings in which ye delight - are dearer to you than God, or His cause; - then wait until God brings about His decision: and God guides not the rebellious. (*Qur'ān, Sūra IX: 24, Toubah*).

The communal nature of social events encouraged a number of family celebrations in poor areas to be held on the street rather than indoors. This led to the emergence of a strong link between houses and their surrounding streets and alleys in the poor sections of the city, even to the extent of considering the street as an extension of the house (as discussed in chapter three, a large number of household activities which are today restricted to the interior of the house, used to take place in the alleyways). But no matter how large an area was included in the concept of home, or how familiar all Ḥedjāzīs were with each other, the private house had to be completely enclosed: private and public spaces should never encroach upon one another.

In a typical traditional Muslim city, there existed three types of boundaries: a property boundary which defined the limits of the privately-owned land; a physical boundary which defined and physically guarded a zone into which a stranger could not pass without permission, like a wall; and a visual boundary which prevented visual access to the property-line from the physical-line<sup>44</sup>. However, and as we see in chapter seven, all of these boundaries coincided in the traditional Ḥedjāzī *ḥāra*; the property line was also the physical, the symbolic and the visual privacy boundary. The house itself was viewed as the first and the last boundaries in the sense that it represented the threshold to the individual's life in the community (upon entering and withdrawing).

---

<sup>44</sup> See Cebeci, Numan N. *The Muslim Environment: Its Evolution, Change and Adaptation. Proceedings of a symposium on Preservation of Islamic Architectural Heritage*. Istanbul, Turkey: Arab Urban Development Institute, 1985. 99.

There also existed gradations or a hierarchy of 'at homeness' in traditional Ḥedjāz. This was illustrated by the strong social links between the self and the house and the street and the residential neighbourhood as representatives of the wider home. The scope of home tends to include a much wider areas than initially expected. In one recollection, the informant's view of home had to include his regular route between the city-gates and his house, an area of whose its familiarity was such as to be embodied within his life and therefore part of his 'home.' The images and concepts of self, house, street and neighbourhood were seen as inseparable. Home was not complete within the walls of the house, for the street was part of it too, even the entire neighbourhood must be included, for it too was part of home. Therefore, a place was a successful place only to the degree it generated a sense of 'being at home.'

...my house, the lane, the *ḥāra*, the mosque, the shop and the vegetable market; all these are my home, you can say my larger home. In Makkah for example, I feel at home in *al-Ḥaram* [the Holy Mosque], mind you it is *Bait Allāh* [the house of God] where one feels most comfortable where Al-Mighty is the Greatest Host. Outside *al-Ḥaram*, I am not exactly at home. I am at home in the house of our mother Eve [Jeddah]. Once in Jeddah, I feel that I have arrived home, and I say to myself: "thank God, oh mother of prosperity and despair [a local slogan = Jeddah]," until I pass *Bab Makkah* [Makkah gate = one of the gates of Jeddah], I then begin longing for my *ḥāra*, until I see *rās al-shāri* ' [street corner] and I say to myself: "you have arrived boy," then my heart looks for *bāb al-zūgāg* [the lane leading to the door of my house], until finally I see *bāb al-maḥil* [the door of my house] and I forget that I even left the place. Yes I think of my Jeddah house when I am in Makkah or in Al-Madinah, but as if my head [imagination] can not go as far as the walls of Jeddah, until I come closer and closer to Jeddah that the image of my *ḥāra* consumes me. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

The succession of environmental levels from region, town, *ḥāra*, street, house and so forth can be interpreted as gradually smaller and inclusive worlds where the larger contains the multiplicity of the smaller which, in turn, in a more condensed and concretized form, refers to and signifies the larger (Fig. 8.4.). The size of 'home' in this case depends on a sequential pattern of identification with different places when the individual feels familiar with; but he was most 'at home' at home! Home, then, stands between anonymity and familiarity and between foreign and personal. This suggests that the experience of home is not at all limited to the dwelling place and that it is also possible to feel out of place in one's house. Yet, houses as meaningful

places should be home places: significant locations that situate identity in its social setting, providing both a sense of attachment and a sense of 'being' at a certain place.

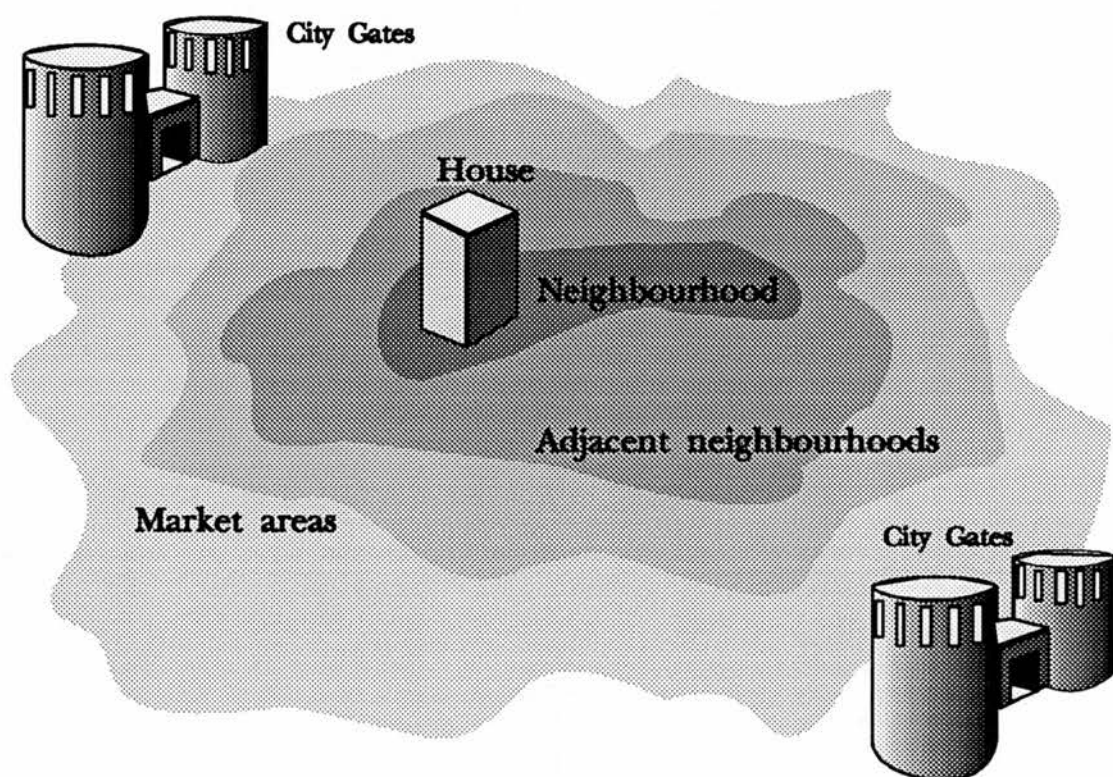


Fig. 8.4. Home-range, and the hierarchy of 'at homeness.'

Additionally, there is an element of identification of different cities with their major features or characteristics like the Holy Mosque in Makkah, the Mosque of the Prophet in Al-Madinah, or the tomb of Eve in Jeddah. What is worth noting, however, is that the sacredness of the House of God in Makkah, for example, did not suffice as a substitute to the familiarity of the secular home of the informant at Jeddah, which he was always conscious about during his trip<sup>45</sup>. Traditional Ḥedjāzī sayings were recited to further elaborate this point: *"A house in a town that is not yours, will not benefit you or your children."* and *"alienation [absence from home] is misery."*

To 'bring the world home' was not achieved by including one's community only, but also by including places and objects. To say that the lane and the neighbourhood are parts of the house would not merely mean that they are part of the architectural image of the house, but also are necessary to the completion of the image

<sup>45</sup> Knowing how critical this statement is, the informant actually whispered it in my ears, and tried to explain what he meant thoroughly to make sure I understood exactly what he meant in the most positive way possible.



of home. As a consequence, Ḥedjāzī towns and cities exhibited a wholeness, a unity that identified them physically and spiritually with the inspirations and values of the society that brought them to existence and enhanced them with meaning.

The feeling of 'at homeness' seems to be progressional rather than strictly territorial but that it is stronger towards the centre (house). Although the feeling of coming home was strong enough upon reaching the city-gates and increasingly so from the *ḥāra* to the street to the house without any need to personalize these places to embody them into one's system of living, this culturally symbolic 'home' embraced a relatively wide range of non place-bound relationships. While 'at homeness' is an inverse function of distance from the house as the core, it also features the degree of familiarity with the environment, the people and other registers of identity. Boundaries, for example, may have more important connotations than enclosures and are primarily social, although they often have territorial relevance, as in the case of the areas around a house which have a public significance yet are privately controlled by the owner of the house (quasi-public places).

## Summary

The principle validity of this chapter exists in its examination of sense of place. The significant influences on the evocation of a sense of place included spatial structures, spiritual associations and patterns of human events and behaviours. We see here a lesser emphasis on a rational attitude to architecture which understands buildings as functional entities than on a psychological attitude where houses share a human experience. Meaning is not only a part of the functions of the house, it is most likely to be the most important function. To limit the analysis of domestic architecture to the study of its configuration would be quite misleading, because the meaning and use of domestic space is not solely dependent on form.

Each home on this planet is a unique example on its own. The individualized character of the concept of home is the product of a set of family beliefs, values and associations, both real and subjective which inspire the home with an atmosphere - 'homeness' - that is as pervasive as any religious ethos. This power of 'home' is so elemental and essential to experience that it cannot be expressed in terms more basic than itself and, as we see, respondents relied on secondary allusions to describe their



feelings about home. In all cases, the pleasures, sweetness or bitterness of home seems to be unspeakable.

Home in traditional Ḥedjāz served as both a utilitarian device and a symbolic one in both the internal and external realms. Home faced both inward and outward, to the family and to the *ḥāra*. Unlike the physical structure of the house, home was not a barrier between public and private realms, but it was certainly an essential counter manipulating, recognizing, marking and 'softening' the boundaries that existed between the domestic sphere of the family and other members of the community. The Ḥedjāzī home was an 'exhibition' of cultural intentions and actions: the 'private' interior space reflected this blend as much as the 'public' exterior façade of the house.

Home as a whole is not and cannot be just the sum of the parts (e.g., mind, spirit, *ḥāra*, street, neighbourhood, shop, mosques, town, region), simply because these parts have a varying balance and an interdependence within the whole. An internal world (*doniyyāh jowāniyyah*) cannot be fully realized in the absence of an external world (*doniyyāh barrāniyyah*) and vice versa. Home and life in the community or within the patterns of the *ḥāra* were inseparable. Home is an irreducible whole because its wholeness cannot be achieved by a simple integration of elements outwith a process of dynamic interaction fulfilled by time. The Home is an integration of multifarious factors within a social dialectic; it reflects a changing synthesis of the wider environment. The traditional Ḥedjāzī environment was a whole, with parts coming secondary to that whole, "*a familial wholeness in which even all sorts of domestic animals likewise participate.*"<sup>46</sup> Therefore, while the major influences on home development were centrifugal, those on the larger environment were successive and aggregational. The whole home then, can not emerge without its parts, but the whole depends on these parts to be able to form, and the parts depend on the whole for their significance.

The notion of transformation and incorporation reflects the mutual unity of people and home (house, neighbourhood, district). The home is an important repository within which socio-cultural norms, interpersonal relationships, invested meanings, transformation and incorporation, are manifested. Home, thus gains meaning and is partly described by these phenomena. Because of the reciprocal relation

---

<sup>46</sup> Jung, C.G. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973. 223.

between these phenomena and the home, they, in turn, are understood partly in terms of the home as an intrinsic aspect of their meaning. Thus, home and the process of home-making are inseparable and mutually define aspects of one another.

For a space to become home, it must be defined, and in the Ḥedjāzī society, socio-spiritual space definitions were as important as physical enclosures. In general, it seems that what constituted a home in Ḥedjāz were mostly more than physical features. The individual's image of home, based on cultural assumptions and definitions of environmental quality was projected onto a location of his choice as being suitable for transformation and incorporation into an existential 'place' where he could establish a position in the universe, in the community and be wholly 'at home.' Within this collective social world, where afflictive behaviour and the tenets of co-existence prevailed, the house became a symbol of group values and was seen as a shelter which had little to do with one's self-image. In most cases the Ḥedjāzī house does not serve as a strong indicator of the owner's character, for this purpose was served by other means (e.g., the deeds of the family). Home, on the other hand, is an abstract projection of self in all its aspects and has to be protected for the sake not only of reputation and image but for the sake of self-value.

Home is a state of mind, a process of growth, and inner-self place before its a private property and a territory and before it is a building. It is consciously considered a physical entity when shelter and private functions are the main concern. The primacy of socio-cultural factors in the establishment of a home concept in Ḥedjāz helped in maintaining an overall homogeneous society, which was in turn reflected on its domestic architecture. While social life is shared and mostly conducted on a communal basis, the house as a physical entity provides the backstage for personal habits and attitudes that are not (or should not be) shared with the community. Areas of the house in which communal activities took place were almost identical in Ḥedjāz (e.g., type and amount of furniture) while personal differences or culturally inconsistent habits were not apparent as they were represented in the most private rooms of the house (e.g., bedrooms).

As discussed in chapter eleven, the abrupt changes of the early 1900s made this lifestyle impossible and destroyed the elderly's familiarity with places, disrupting their spatial and social patterns. Changes in the planning and structures of the old sections of the Ḥedjāzī cities, not only modernized these cities it also destroyed all

what was considered to be 'home' and reduced it to the confines of the house. The entire gamut of the Ḥedjāz habits, beliefs and traditions became irrelevant and incongruent with the new lifestyles. This change in the traditional concept of 'home' resulted in a consequential change in the societal customs concerning communal existence and a reduction in the significance of 'homeness' outside the house. In short, it made the Ḥedjāz a 'homeless' culture.

Finally, all the above described feelings, emotions, inspirations, dreams, values and attitudes that combine to make a house 'home' are deeply personal and controlled by culture. Such notions as transformation, incorporation and the sense of place in general and how people used them, all affected people deeply. But not as intimately as the way in which the traditional culture of Ḥedjāz directed the organization of the psyche, which in turn had a profound effect upon the ways people looked at places and things, behaved, made decisions, ordered priorities, organized their lives, how they thought and perceived architecture.

## CHAPTER NINE

### SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS ON PRODUCTION IN THE TRADITIONAL ḤEDJĀZĪ HOUSE

## CHAPTER NINE

### SOCIO-CULTURAL LIMITATIONS ON PRODUCTION IN THE TRADITIONAL ḤEDJĀZĪ HOUSE

---

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to identify the factors that contributed to the emergence of the particular 'style' of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house, and to measure the extent of the influence of social and physical determinants upon the resulting form and their limitations upon novelty within this context. For these purposes, this chapter synthesises the data contained in chapters six, seven and eight<sup>1</sup>.

I shall first take a more detailed look at the *mu'allemin*, their perception and their role in producing the house. This is important to understand the processes of development and change in the form and space configuration of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house that took place between the 18th and early 20th centuries. The main part of the chapter is an examination of the variable elements that influenced the design criteria within which the traditional *mu'allemin* of Ḥedjāz operated. This will reveal the areas in which the *mu'allemin* were able to put their ideas into practice with freedom, and those areas where they were restricted. It will also show which aspects of traditional Ḥedjāzī culture and domestic architecture were constant and invariable, or changed very slowly, and which aspects were variable and in what ways. In establishing where the fundamentals and constants lay, it will be necessary to distinguish between traditional and modern influences upon the process of producing a house.

To present these ideas, the chapter is divided into three sections: The first part deals with the *mu'allemin*'s own values, ethics, and codes of proper conduct (*'uṣūl*, *tagālīd*, and *a'rāff al-mihnnah*) as sources of architectural form and appearance. The

---

<sup>1</sup> As a reminder, the main sources for this thesis are the three *mu'allemin*: *mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, April 6-15, 1990), *mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī (Jeddah, March 29-30, 1990) and *mu'allemin* Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rifī (Al-Madinah, April 25-30, 1990). The clients and households are represented by the two families of al-Makkī (Jeddah/Makkah, May 18-19, 1990), and 'Afīf (Jeddah/Makkah, March 12-13, 1990).

second part deals with the *space* within which the *mu'allemin* were able to present their work to their society, and the tolerance of that society to change. This shows how the *mu'allemin* played a double role in innovating within the tradition - so that the tradition could absorb new ideas and techniques in a controlled and organic way - while preventing incoherent novelties which could conflict with either the tradition of building, traditional life, or both. The third part deals with the traditional design criteria used by *mu'allemin* to judge and evaluate the work of one another, or to determine the quality of their own. These codes or criteria were also used in the communication process between clients and *mu'allemin* to convey certain messages (i.e., approval of work quality, rejection, objection), and for identifying the 'class' of *mu'allemin* (i.e., recommended, not recommended, acceptable)<sup>2</sup>. This part aims at showing that the traditional *mu'allemin* followed principles but not rigid rules or forms.

Finally, it is to be noted that the representative authority of the traditional Hedjāzīs interviewed is enough to suggest uniformity of beliefs and attitudes. However, their quotations are only examples in evidence and not necessarily proof of commonly held beliefs. As such though, I believe that they suffice as indications of the common norms of the culture in question, and that they can be used to support the arguments presented here.

### 9.1. Ethics and morals of the producers of the traditional Hedjāzī house

In previous chapters we have discussed the social aspects of the traditional Hedjāzī culture and its effect on the production of the house and its various environments (neighbourhood, adjacent spaces). House architecture among the traditional Hedjāzīs, as discussed in chapters six, seven and eight, was associated with a multiplicity of roles and identities in conjunction with its diverse functions as home, house, family, group, land and universe among others. These divergent roles

---

<sup>2</sup> As we see later in the chapter, if a *mu'allemin's* work was described as *shughlū daradja 'ulā* (lit. his work is first class), then he would be recommended by either another client, another *mu'allemin*, or by the head of the building guild for future projects. For more details on the subject, refer to the rights and obligations of the members of the building guild (chapter five), the initial stages of producing a house in traditional Hedjāz (chapter six), and classifying the merits of *mu'allemin* later in this chapter.



together played a part in determining the shape each house would assume, the actions that were structured within it, and the meanings it conveyed. Here I will argue that traditional architectural form and appearance (aesthetics) have also constituted an important part of architectural meaning. The emphasis on socio-cultural norms, values and beliefs that previous chapters might have conveyed may suggest that these reigned supreme over the architectural form-language of the Ḥedjāzī house. The description of the traditional process of producing a house, presented in chapter six, might also suggest a lack of aesthetic sense or concern on the *mu'allemin's* side. I shall argue against such suggestions by showing that the traditional criteria of architectural aesthetics were determined by the building's appropriateness to the prevailing social norms and cultural mores, the congruence between its form and function, the soundness of its structure, vertical and horizontal alignment of its walls, and the congruence between its colour, forms and building material and its context. This should add to our knowledge and understanding of the nature of the society and the meanings of its house architecture.

The concept of *beauty* in general - and as far as the traditional domestic architecture is concerned - could exist simply in the eyes of the beholder, the nostalgic longing for the past, and the tendency of most researchers - like myself - to *beautify* all that belongs to past era. However, I will attempt to recognize this beauty as a result of the traditional proper sense of handling practical architectural problems.

Throughout this research, it has been acknowledged that the traditional Ḥedjāzī domestic architecture was integrated into everyday life, it was a social art as well as an art of service. The traditional notions of 'artistic builders' or *al-mu'allemin al-fannānīn* that are discussed later in the chapter, show that the more efficiently operating, imaginatively dreamed, and technically sound, the more beautiful the house was considered, hence, the more desired it was, and the more 'artistic' was the *mu'allemin* who built it. This interrelationship between architectural aesthetics and practical aims and functional efficiency suggests, in turn, an important connection between the traditional social values and societal sense of beauty (or aesthetics).

It is worth mentioning also that throughout the interviews (and may be for reasons of cultural sensitivity or courtesy to others), I could not detect whether or not there existed a direct relation between the notions of beauty and good, and ugliness

and evil. The *mu'allemin* and their clients were hesitant to spell out negative descriptions of the work of one another, nor were they able to credit or criticise their own. In most cases, negative descriptions were conveyed by denying the existence of certain good qualities rather than using the binary opposite. For example, a *mu'allemin* would describe a building as "good or not so good" instead of "good or bad." Only in very few cases where an outspoken *mu'allemin* or client would use a negative description of a house, as discussed later in this chapter. In general, however, I believe that there existed a strong correlation between 'good' and 'desirable' as opposed to 'not good' and 'undesirable' in the building traditions of Hedjāz.

In the traditional Hedjāzī dialect, especially that of *mu'allemin*, description of a house as *jamīl* or *ḥilow* (beautiful/handsome) would usually refer to a number of things simultaneously. This could be referring to works of design, structure, external components (e.g., *rawāshīn*), or to particular aspects that the speaker has in mind. The exact meaning of the thing referred to could be detected only within the context of the sentence. For example, if the discussion was about the structure of a house, and the description used was something like *sharḥilow* [lit. sweet work = good work], the meaning conveyed here puts more emphasis on the general quality of the structure, with no reference to particular details other than the fact that this particular aspect of the house is acceptable. On the other hand, if the description used was, for example, *shughul marṣūḍ* [the work is well-balanced; well-calculated], then the exact meaning and the aspect being described could be detected (in this case it is the measurement and layout of the foundation).

## 9.2. Social values of *mu'allemin* as sources of architectural 'aesthetics'

The traditional *mu'allemin* of Hedjāz operated within a certain code of ethics, basic requirements and qualities or design and building criteria - if we may appropriate the term - and these had an active and direct role on the process of producing the house. It is important to bear in mind that what is described here was never conveyed to me by either *mu'allemin* or clients in the format presented in this chapter. What I am about to present is a set of carefully selected notions that were repeated - or emphasised - by a number of my interviewees in separate occasions but within similar contexts of discussion. The sequence of these criteria or codes of ethics

is also arranged - as closely as possible - in accordance with the emphasis given to them by my sources. In most cases they were not mentioned as separate points, but rather as a whole principle that included some or all of them. It is also of great importance to bring to the reader's attention that all these points were generated when discussions between my interviewees and myself revolved around the general traditional principle of "*makhāfatu Allāh wa al-raghbah fī tawābuh* (the fear of God and the desire for His reward)," as the ethics of Ḥedjāzī *mu'allemīn* (this principle further testifies to the role of religious beliefs in the traditional Ḥedjāzī life as discussed later in this chapter).

### 9.2.1. 'Itgān/'Ikmāl (Proper completion, fulfilment)

*El-ḥadāgah* [creativity, intelligence] was not in just building the house. For the house must be completed *zai al-nāss* [lit. as good people would build it = properly completed], and *yīkūn shughulak naḍīf* [lit. to be a clean job = well built] that it can stand on its feet when your great-grandson's feet can no longer hold him [for a long time]. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 9, 1990).

This criterion governed the process of producing a house from the moment that the *mu'allem* and his client met on the building site. "You would not accept the idea of someone raising your child on your behalf in a way that is completely different than yours while you are standing there and watching your child go astray."<sup>3</sup> This is what *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin felt about the prospect of being stopped by the client from completing the production of a house - which he considered as his own begotten child - for another *mu'allem* to complete it. To prepare for such possible occurrences, *mu'allemīn* had to be willing - from the first day - to see the building through until its completion. However, the criterion of proper completion had a wide range of impacts on the process of producing a house as it operated on a number of levels. The lowest of these levels is discussed in chapter six (when the client conducted daily-inspections of the progress of construction). If the *mu'allem*, during the stages of brick-laying, for example, approved of the quality of *madāmīk* (n.sing. *medmāk* = course of stones) alignment without vigorous inspection on his side, and the quality of work was not up to the client's liking, the *mu'allem* and his building team could then face the prospect of being relieved of their duties.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990.

Accordingly, the *mu'allemin* operated under this criterion of 'proper completion' on a daily-basis, and as the most basic of their skills as craftsmen. The highest level of operating under this criterion was represented by the *mu'allemin's* self-satisfaction with their reputable quality of work and proper timing<sup>4</sup>. The criterion of proper completion governed the quality of the *mu'allemin's* work for the life span of their buildings. Any future structural faults for example were - in most cases - delegated to 'improper completion,' and never to a client's humble budget or weak building material. Unless it was an act of God, a structural fault would be mainly blamed on the *mu'allemin* who built the house and his team. It would have also have a negative effect on his reputation and that of the institution of the building guild.

*Sheikh al-mu'allemin* was summoned in such cases to pass his judgement (as to whose fault was it). This took the form of repairs and maintenance work to the damaged house. In spite of the importance of the notion of 'proper completion' as a design and building criterion, and the sincere desire of most *mu'allemin* to be associated with it, no building in traditional Ḥedjāz would ever be described as *kāmil* (complete). "*Proper completion is for God alone*," was a common traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb which means that only God Almighty is capable of producing complete and flawless work. Buildings - as well as people - would thus be described as "*kullahum takmīl*" (lit. full of completion) because they possess good qualities that make them - with some exaggeration - slightly close to being complete. However, the criterion governing the wish to properly complete and accomplish, as *mu'allemin's* first aim, meant to truly want to do so, *mū bas jaber khāwāṭer* (not just to conciliate or propitiate clients). The incentive for proper completion was "*makhāfatu Allāh wa al-raghbah fī tawābuh* (the fear of God and the desire for His reward)," hence, the final verdict laid within the domain of God, then that of the client. This sincere desire would lead us to the second most important criterion or code of ethics:

### 9.2.2. 'Amānah/Ṣidg (Faithfulness, honesty)

To be honest and truthful is to be a good Muslim, and to be a good *mu'allemin*...You could hide things from your wife to save your day, but

---

<sup>4</sup> As discussed in chapter six, some *mu'allemin* like *mu'allemin* Abū Zaid in Jeddah for example, was "very demanding and tough on his workmen, and was famous for being the fastest *mu'allemin* to deliver his houses." This quality gave the *mu'allemin* a great reputation and social status. (*Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

you should never never deceive your *zabūn* [client], your friends and colleagues instead of treating them indulgently. For example, *mizānāk fī albinnā* [lit. your balance in construction = accuracy of structural measurement, choice of building materials and appropriateness of one's ideas to the purpose they will serve], must be extra precise...truth will prevent a lot of mischiefs from happening, and it will keep you from doing wrong things like...claiming to be a knowledgeable *mu'allem* when you are not...One can fool another man, but you will not be able to fool God Almighty. And what about *al-ḥadjar* [the stone]! This will fall on your head or you will fall on it, head first. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

As discussed later in this chapter, one of the main virtues of members of the traditional Ḥedjāzī building guild - as *mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin* emphasised - was honesty: a building would be described by both clients and *mu'allemīn* with a number of qualities, most of which would mainly refer to the loyalty of the *mu'allem*, and his care for the reputation of his guild and the satisfaction of his client. It was believed in traditional Ḥedjāz that a house would reveal the intentions and actions of its builders before it would that of its dwellers. Therefore, the *mu'allem* had to make sure that he 'really' knew his client's intentions from the first day. For example, if the client happened to be a rich merchant with a relatively ample budget, the *mu'allem's* primary step was to learn from his client - if he did not know him personally - whether he wants this budget to *show* on the building, or should it instead be invested internally, in quality building materials, decorations and the like. In any case, the building will reveal the client's socio-economic status, but the emphasis on its size was more readily acceptable by the society than the lavishness of its imported material or extravagant treatment as shown by this statement (discussed in chapter eight):

Between us, the ordinary Ḥedjāzīs, if one of started spending large sums of money on the façades of his house, people became offended, and he was condemned for trying to be different. It was as if belonging to us [not so rich] did not suit him, and he was immediately shunned by the *ḥāra*. Real men were judged by their accomplishments on behalf of others, their morality and ability to serve their community, not by how much wealth their trade brought them. (*Al-Makkī family*, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

A *mu'allem* would not be described by his community as an 'honest' or 'loyal' man unless he achieves this reputation through his deeds: the houses he build. Prospective clients placed this virtue on top of their choice of *mu'allemīn's* list of



qualities. If a *mu'allem* happened to be the most 'artistic,' 'creative' or the best builder in Ḥedjāz, but lacked honesty - in the broadest sense of the world - he would practically be discredited, as noted by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin:

*El-mu'allem illī tishufū zai kidah, shughlū tarmīg, 'alā elḥurukruk, janinbū bi 'adjaruh wa badjaruh* [lit. A *mu'allem* that you know this (dishonesty) about him, and that his work is fragmentary, leave him aside to his vices and faults] or you will join him in his sorrow and grief, for dishonesty have short ropes [a dishonest man would not last]. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

The criterion of truthfulness and honesty was also closely related to another important virtue of the traditional *mu'allemīn* of Ḥedjāz; protection against plagiarism. Between *mu'allemīn*, accidental plagiarism was not a fully acceptable notion. Buildings took a relatively long time to be built and ideas were exchanged freely in coffee-houses between *mu'allemīn*. Good design concepts, especially unconventional ones were not expected to be repeated in two houses during their production process unless one of the *mu'allemīn* was in the habit of "*fatih al-mandal* [palm-reading]."<sup>5</sup> In such cases, the two *mu'allemīn* would call for a tribunal or guild-meeting (*jam'iyyat taḥkīm*) to decide which building would proceed and which would be altered if one of the *mu'allemīn* was proven to be at risk. Because of the severity of this accusation - being called a cheater - *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin recalled attending only one case of plagiarism in his entire life.

### 9.2.3. 'Ikhlaṣ/Ḥerṣ/Mutāb'ah/Tadgīg (Sincerity, follow-up, quality-control)

*Itqān al-bedāiyyah niṣf al-'amal* [well begun is half done], but some *mu'allemīn*, may God guide them, they do not dig deep enough to remove this soft material [bad soil] and start building immediately, thinking that the land could bear their loads, and to save themselves some money. But they end up paying more money and losing reputation by having to *y'addelo* [level] their houses. To me this land is like my skin, I can feel it, I can smell it, I can detect its illness and I can prepare the right medication for it before it hurts. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 6, 1990).

---

<sup>5</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 10, 1990.



This criterion governed mainly the ability of a *mu'allem* to 'put his words into action.' In other words, his work should not fall short of his client's expectations. This meant that from the moment "you stand with your client *fūg al ḥufrah* [on the hole = building-site], until you submit the house and put your stamp on the papers, the *mu'allem* was to behave as if he owns the house and its vicinity."<sup>6</sup> While, for example, it was the client's responsibility to deal with the carpenters producing the wooden components of the house like doors, windows and *mashrābiyyāt* (bay-windows), the *mu'allem* was not supposed to show any *maḥsūbiyyah* (favouritism) towards his fellow craftsmen on the expenses of the client's expectations. The *mu'allem* was to inspect the craftsmanship of all those involved in the design and building processes to guarantee his client a "...wholesome work of the highest possible quality, not patchy pieces of work of different qualities. When the client and his guests come to inspect the house, everything they see and touch will point at you, your quality as a *mu'allem*, a *raiyyis* and a captain of the ship."<sup>7</sup> This extended the responsibilities of the *mu'allem* to the inspection of other craftsmen's workshops, quarries and sources of building material (even those overseas sometimes). Once the quality of these was determined, a *mu'allem* was to inspect their installation in the building, refinement of details and so on until the completion of the house:

*Shughul abūk ya waladī lā yighlībūk* [Always insist on the quality of your father's work (conventions and norms) or you will be beaten neglected or dishonoured]. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 10, 1990).

The relatively lengthy duration of the process of producing a house (an average of three to four years), the task of inspecting the work of the building team, as well as that by other guilds (i.e. carpenters), have placed great burdens on all *mu'allemīn*. Some of them assigned special foremen to help them carry some of the physically and time-consuming inspection jobs. However, and as *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin pointed out, only the *mu'allem* - "like the captain of the ship" - would be responsible before his client, the community, and the '*urff*' of the building guild (practising norms and principles) for any deficiency or breach of mutual trust by other craftsmen:

---

<sup>6</sup> The *mu'allem* mentioned the house vicinity here as if it was owned by the client, but to him, this refers to his own concern for other people's properties as we see later in the chapter. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990.

Trust your foreman but keep an opened eye on him, *walā tuflut al ḥabil ‘alā el ghārib* [lit. and do not loosen the rope = do not give rein to others] because at the end of the day it is your bread and theirs that you will be jeopardising. (*Mu‘allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

Therefore, the continuous presence of the *mu‘allem* on the site, his thorough *tadgīg* (precision) and vigorous *mutāba‘ah* (follow-up) would assure him ‘proper completion’ and guarantee him - and his client - a good product, hence the desirable reputation and the social status. The continuous presence of the *mu‘allem* on the building site was governed by a fourth criterion that, according to *mu‘allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, was responsible for his healthy life until the age of 95:

#### 9.2.4. *Nashāt/Himmah/Muthābarah* (Industriousness, persistence)

Some clients will *yibarridū himmatak* [dishearten or discourage you] by continuous criticism, continuous alterations and the like. But in spite of everything, *el-mu‘allem lā bud yukūn ḥār fī shughlū* [must be hot = exuberant in his work]. You should set your pace of work from the moment you pray the dawn prayer till the moment you pray the dusk prayer...*kull al nahār ‘alā ridjil wāḥdah* [lit. all day on one foot = non-stop]. Remember that care and diligence bring luck and he who grows will soon harvest. Take a nap only if your workmen fall asleep, but never make a habit of turning your back when they are working, otherwise you better have the heart and face [courage and patience] to face the consequences. (*Mu‘allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

This at first may sound like a sound advice from an elder who experienced an undisturbed healthy life. However, the statement reveals a number of principles. It sets forth the basic rules of dealing with critical clients as well as the ‘skill’ of dealing with other craftsmen and professionals. It points to the responsibility of the architect as a coordinator, organizer and foreman during the process of producing a house. This *himmah* was believed to counteract any deficiency in a *mu‘allem’s* work and that of others, as it allowed for quick responses to take place before problems could develop beyond remedy. If the architect supervising a project was ‘all over’ the site on daily basis, chances are he might, as in the traditional case, get various other ideas of handling on-site technical problems that were not conceived of at the office. It also

gives the client further guarantees that the "*mu'alletm gudāmū šūṭ wā šūrā* [lit. the *mu'alletm* could be seen and heard = wholeheartedly present]."<sup>8</sup>

The reader will notice the connection between this criterion and the former one in terms of the *mu'alletmīn*'s concern with their ability to lead a productive, responsible and efficient building team. These two criteria, along with the previously mentioned ones, were the tools by which *mu'alletmīn* were almost sure to guarantee their clients - and themselves - the translation of their design ideas into physical manifestations. This may also include *mu'alletm* Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin's advice to future architects to "remember to take the right road even if it was the longest, that *likull mudjtahiden nāṣīb* [constant application overcomes the greatest difficulties] and that repetition teaches well those who are slow learners like myself."

... do not tell me that you are a *mi'mārī* [an architect] unless you tell me first that you have touched these stones, carried them, felt their weight and your face was covered with their dust and debris. (*Mu'alletm* Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

I believe that this last advice represents a lesson for architects and engineers who are divorced from the main fields of their profession and locked in the comfort and unreality of their offices. As we see later in the chapter, *mu'alletm* Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin considered these conditions as the primary qualifications of architects, without which he would not be willing to accept the title *mu'alletm* or *mi'mārī*.

#### 9.2.5. 'Ishrāk/'Istishārah (Consultation, involvement, sympathy)

First: *kollanā amānāt ba'aḍ*: We are all the custodians, the trustees, and the guardians of each other. Second: Your faith will not be complete until you wish for your brother what you wish for yourself. [A gentlemen's agreement means that] we - the neighbours - trust each other beyond any rules or regulations. (*Mu'alletm* Ṣaḍaqaḥ 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

...the owner of the land does not have much to say in the project, the final authority is *al-mu'alletm*'s. The client gives you his budget and

---

<sup>8</sup> *Mu'alletm* Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990.

may suggest to you his desired number of rooms and their areas and then depends on God [leave it to fate and leave the site]. (*Mu'allemin* Al-Rifī, Al-Madinah, March 25, 1990).

when it comes to the client's desires and needs, I know exactly what's in his head, what he likes or dislikes, what his brothers would prefer, and even what his sons-in-law might like to have in their rooms. (*Mu'allemin* Şaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

...one hand doesn't clap, you need two or may be more to make a real noise [a good job]. I did not think alone, for not only did I have assistants who would always suggest something here and something there, but I had the whole *ḥāra* to worry about. (*Mu'allemin* Şaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

From his name I can tell you how much he carries in his pocket...in our community, the face of God is not covered [people new everything about each other] I can tell if the fabric was in excess so I would give him a roomy drape, and if the material was meagre, I would give him a just-fitting and covering wrap. (*Mu'allemin* al-Rifī, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990).

Of course we knew the habits of each other, but we also knew that homes were secrets [secret places] and each family stood on its own in front of God. Some people are conservative and religious, some are liberal and only fellow travellers. All this could be seen in the *madjlis* as if it were written *bil-bont al-'arīḍ* [with large letters on the walls of the room]. ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

The customs and traditions are clear and open, observe them and you will find how easily love, dignity and honour can be won...he who has a head with two eyes must follow the ways of the people<sup>9</sup>. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

These opinions are indicators of a closely-knit community where involvement and sympathy did not represent a problem. However, these quotations might also represent some contradiction with the notion of consultation, since everything seems to be known about everyone in the society. This, however, could be safely dismissed if we consider the socio-cultural proximity between clients and *mu'allemin* and the notion of indirect involvement of the client in the building process (discussed in

---

<sup>9</sup> A traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb which means that if someone wants to belong to a group he must observe and comprehend their norms, habits, and values.

chapter six). What seems to us like a contradiction was referred to by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin as the 'thread.' He considered the process of dealing with clients as an art that few *mu'allemīn* could master: "Dealing with clients and with people in general is an art and a talent: the talent of maintaining *sha'rat Mū'āwīyyah*<sup>10</sup>." While the maintenance of this string differed from one *mu'allem* to another, the process of communicating with the client and involving him in the process of producing a house was a must regardless of the form it took (direct or indirect).

Like the other criteria discussed above, this one operated on a number of levels, the lowest of which was to ensure total agreement between the client's requests and the *mu'allem's* understanding of them, as far as building material, budget constraints, space arrangement and construction techniques were concerned. This agreement prevented clients' dissatisfaction with the *mu'allem's* work leading to alterations, demolition and rebuilding one part of the house or another. The highest level was the importance of this criterion to the process of producing the house, as manifested in its effect on the protection and maintenance of cultural norms and values, and the building tradition as a whole.

The maintenance of communication between members of the society and their craftsmen was of great vitality to the continuation of time-honoured traditions, experience, moral standards and values. As described by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin:

The camel does not see his hump [one does not see his faults]. Failure to maintain good contact with all the builders you once knew, dead and alive, what your parents taught you, and what your old *mu'allem* showed you is as if *kā'nak ya abu zaid lā ruḥt walā jait* [lit. you did not leave your place = you did not learn anything from life]. *Ḥattā lā yinfariḡ al'igid* [lit. So as not to disperse the pearl necklace = to maintain the order of things] you should involve others whom you trust in every detail, major or minor, direct or indirect, be they your client, peers or neighbours. God put his secrets in the most humble of his creatures and those who are one year older than you have a year more of experience. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 11, 1990).

---

<sup>10</sup> Mū'āwīyyah Ibn Abī Sūffīān (reign 661/41 AH till 679/60 AH) was the Caliph who coined this slogan when he was asked about his ability to deal with the society: "If they pull the thread, I will release some, and if they release some, I will pull some. In all cases, the thread should remain intact." (The Caliph's answer according to *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin. Jeddah, April 7, 1990).



### 9.2.6. *Al-ḥirṣ ‘alā mashā’ir al-nās* (Caring about, courtesy to others)

Care for others and they will care for you, and as you like for yourself you must like for others. The Prophet (PBUH) ordered us to take care of the furthest of our neighbours before the closest of them. When you stand on the building site you are not alone in the world, the irritable *mu’allem* is useless on site and to his community. There are other sick and tired people who are not interested in the quality of your work as much as to give their bodies some rest that you will be needing some day. Today you pass a building site that its engineer seemed to have made an oath to wake the entire city and shake every child in it on behalf of their mothers. This is one thing. The second thing is to do with your peers: do not bring them down or degrade them for a momentary gain. The last thing is that the other houses in the neighbourhood might not be as strong and young as the one your building, so do not lean on them - if you are going to - break their backs and kill some people. Watch for *madjāriḥ* [private spots] when you open windows and doors. The real *mu’allem* is not only a *bannā’* [builder], he must be a *mu’allem* of life. (*Mu’allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 11, 1990).

The most generally applied rule in the production of the traditional house of Ḥedjāz was the notion of "neither harm nor reciprocating harm."<sup>11</sup> The application of this criterion was observed from the first day of the process of producing a house as discussed in chapter six. The owner of the prospective house arranged for a dinner gathering on the day before the commencement of any construction work so as to ask for the appreciation of neighbours and those who would be directly affected by the construction work. While such courtesy was usually observed by the owners of the house throughout the duration of the process, the *mu’allem* had a number of roles to play. For example, the arrangement of windows and openings of the house, along with terraces and outdoor areas, was carefully conceived so as not to harm the privacy of other adjacent houses. This was considered during the design stages of *talbīq al-‘arḍ/Fiṣlat al-bait* (matching the land and the house-image, tailoring the house). During the stages of *raṣṣ al-ḥadjar* (brickwork) and *raf‘ al-binā’*, *baqiyyat al-adwār* (typical floor construction), and *taosī‘ al-bait* (extension of the house), and when the system of "*ḥammil ‘alā jārak*" (charge your loads on, or load your weight on the

---

<sup>11</sup> An authentic Prophetic *Ḥadīth*.



neighbouring house)<sup>12</sup> was in operation, courtesy to the extension needs of neighbouring houses was observed.

As discussed earlier, the *mu'alletm's* consideration of the house and its vicinity as his own during the process of its production worked as a further measure of caring about the properties of others. This was the highest level of applying this criterion, along with the *mu'alletm's* respect for the prevailing norms and values of the locality wherein he was building. This varied from simple adherence to building conventions in respect of senior master-builders (*a'rāff al-binā' or 'ūṣūl al mihnah* = fundamentals of the building craft), to the *mu'alletm's* socio-cultural obligations to the Ḥedjāzī culture in general (this is discussed in more details later in the chapter).

*Mashā'ir al-nāss*, or care for people's feelings was a very extensive notion in traditional Ḥedjāz that included people's emotions, beliefs, pride, dignity, physiological needs as well as their dreams and aspirations. Each stage of the process of producing a house seems to have touched the boundary of one of these human requirements or another, which, in turn, placed further responsibilities on the shoulders of the *mu'alletm*. These, by time, became part of the qualifications of those wishing to become members of the building guild, and the attainment of which was a prerequisite for candidates of honourable titles like *mu'alletm or bannā'* (master-builder) or *raiyyis* (foremen).

#### **9.2.7. *Tandīm al-'amal/Takhṭīṭ 'alā ilmadā alba'īd* (Organization and long-term planning)**

We should not look into the future because it is not ours. Man proposes and God disposes. However, God expects a good person to look ahead, plan and not be short-sighted when he says "work for the day of judgment." *Dawām al-ḥāl min al-muḥāl* [stability is unattainable], some things could not be helped because it is in God's knowledge, but one must look before one leaps, save the white piaster for the black day, and spread one's cover to the length of one's feet. (*Mu'alletm Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990*).

---

<sup>12</sup> As discussed in chapter six, the notion of common or party walls was very common throughout Ḥedjāz, where most houses developed as row houses in closely-packed residential areas.

Due to the relatively lengthy duration of the process of producing a house, it was essential for *mu'allemin* to think ahead of matters like changing prices of building material, cost of living, changing family circumstances, needs and requirements of each time period. As discussed in chapter six, the *mu'allemin* did not have a complete perception of the final shape of the house during the early stages of its design and construction. A *mu'allemin* simply conceived a rough image of how the final product would look like, and then proceeded towards the implementation of that image. He was also able to change some of the space arrangements that he might have made earlier, and so on until the house was completed. As he went along in this simultaneous design and construction processes, long-term organization was essential to save him and his client a lot of time and expense. It required more involvement of the *mu'allemin* into his client's personal details as well as in those of his building team:

If you were not *ṣāṭī 'alā* [familiar or friendly with] your client, you would not go and ask him whether his children were going to marry soon, or whether his grandson would reach puberty within the coming two years and require a room of his own rather than sharing with his sister. You simply learn about such matters as life went on in the *ḥāra*. However, you need to know his financial status, the state of his merchandise at sea, you follow his news as if it concerns your own pocket. I am not talking about my own *odjrah* [fee], but about the main bulk of expenses: *ḥadjar, mūnah, khashab...* [stones, mortar, wood] One should not look into the future because it is not ours, but we need to prepare for *khatlāt* [surprises] like, may God forbid the departure of your best *raiyyis, garairi or naḥḥāt* whom you were depending on for a tricky idea here and a difficult job there when you need them the most. (*Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 10, 1990).

*Mu'allemin* were conscious about such situations so, where possible, they began with the most difficult and most demanding parts of the house. The staircase-shaft was one example, along with column capitals, free-standing arches, wooden balconies and the like. To make use of the best available material and workforce as soon as possible was the *mu'allemin's* preferred traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb, because "a bird in your hand is better than ten on the tree." This precautions assured both the *mu'allemin* and their clients the best possible results within the advantages and limitations of their resources, including the time factor. The expertise of special members of the building team, rightly called 'hands' by the *mu'allemin*, were essential for the application of new design ideas as well as for the completion of a house within an assigned period of time. This, in turn, gave the *mu'allemin* great pride

and satisfaction, added to the good reputation of the *mu'alle*m and his team and guaranteed them future projects. In short, this was the ideal situation that all *mu'alle*mīn were aiming to achieve.

#### 9.2.8. 'Iḥsās/Zoug/Tadjmīl (Sensitivity, taste, beautification)

*Tarbī' al-mahil* [squaring the room] was a basic procedure that a young *mu'alle*m could achieve, but keeping it *murabb'* [square] for five floors was not something everybody could do. It was a black day for a *mu'alle*m who discovered a *maiyyalah* [deviation] in his walls or angles...oh, his shame could not be described...better he blamed it on the land. (*Mu'alle*m al-Rīfī, Al-Madinah, April 25, 1990).

What a feeling one gets when the house is finished, standing there like a bridegroom in his wedding day and *kullu ḥadjar fīh yugūl shūfūnī* [lit. each stone in it would say: "look at me."]. Let people point to the house and say "God is Great, he who lives close to the perfume maker will most naturally smell good." (*Mu'alle*m Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

The beauty of a building - as discussed later in this chapter - was judged by a set of criteria based, for example, on the *mu'alle*m's artistic merits in the form of proper wall alignment and so on. It was also to do with the strength and stability of its structure, its youth and newness. Notice that the *mu'alle*m took pride in the beauty of his construction which was tied with the youth of the structure (i.e., bridegroom), as well as the smooth and clean newly-plastered walls. The morphology used by the *mu'alle*m (i.e., the speaking stone) suggests that it was the *duty* of the house to reflect the effort, care and sensitivity of the *mu'alle*m, otherwise he would not get the satisfaction or pride feelings of achievement.

Accordingly, it was each *mu'alle*m's concern to ensure that his buildings would 'speak' of his sensitivity and his ability to 'make things beautiful.' The simplest level on which this criterion was manifested began with the notion of 'iḥsās, zoug or tadjmīl (sense of beauty) as design criteria that were attentive, for example, to choice of colour schemes, wooden and other components of the structure in accordance to a preconceived house image. Again this was done with the utmost respect to people's

(and not only the client's) prevalent, preferred or positively-connoted colour schemes<sup>13</sup>, quality building material (e.g., rich wood for doors and windows, weather-resistant plasters), and so forth.

The highest level of operating under this criterion was 'innovation' which is discussed later in this chapter. *Mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin's statement, discussed here and in chapter six, that it came to his mind one day that he could make a recess in the façade resembling a skylight but without reaching the sky, testifies to the validity and vitality of this notion. While the following statement implies that the *mu'allem* who was not the master of his craft would repeat the forms of a poorly-designed house without realizing or daring to face his mistakes, it points to *tadjmīl* as a taken-for-granted notion that was a basic quality of a *mu'allem* who is in command of his craft:

...*al-mu'allem ellī māhū wākī* [who is not in command of his craft or lacks self-confidence] could be satisfied with a poorly-imagined house, and keeps repeating it. He will tell you that *min khāf silim* [he who is afraid will not take risks]....(*Mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

#### 9.2.9. *Şiyyānah/Ramramah/Tadjdīd* (Maintenance, renovation)

We suspended houses for *ramramah* or *tarmīm* [restoration]. If the owner felt that his house was becoming *shaiyybah* [old-man], he came to me to *aroddoh shabāb* [turn it into a young-man]. It is a more enjoyable job when one sees the admiration in the eyes of the client when he sees his house becoming a bridegroom... (*Mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

The importance of the youth of the house as a positive character of the building - and as opposed to the negative connotation of an old house (*bait shaibah*) - was closely related to the criterion of *tadjmīl* (beautification). Each *mu'allem* had to make sure that his buildings either 'remained young' or at least were well-maintained. But for a house to remain young was not something that a *mu'allem* could control, unless he was asked by his client to do so. Therefore, the other alternative was to

---

<sup>13</sup> For example, white for purity and peace, green for prosperity, and blue for tranquillity, coolness and hope (Also see chapter seven).

insist on durable building materials from the beginning and to promote structural maintenance. This last point would lead us to the notion of educating the client as a very traditional concept:

Some twenty or twenty-five years ago, when we wanted to point to one of our clients that it was time for him to make a *'amrah* [lit. overhaul= renovation] to the house, we would tell him "*ya fullān [oh master so and so], we want to get your house married,*" meaning that it was time for your house to look like a youthful bridegroom: young and handsome. Some would answer you with a traditional saying like "*it is our father's house and people are chasing or evicting us,*" or "*one is growing a beard and the other is bothered by it,*" to tell you that it is none of your business, but few days later you would see them at your *'atabah* (door-step) asking for your help. (*Mu'Allem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 10, 1990).

Similarly, in the initial stages of the house production, the *mu'Allem* would remind his client with the traditional saying: "*ya mitrakhiṣ ya mitnaghiṣ*" [lit. to go for cheap is to go for deficiency and embitterment], aiming at emphasising the importance of choosing quality and lasting products to insure their efficiency, hence, clients' satisfaction. Some traditional societal values emphasised the importance of having a young and well-maintained house<sup>14</sup>, at least externally, while others contradicted this notion by emphasising that it is not the gay coat that makes the gentleman. In both cases, house maintenance and renovation was the dream of every *mu'Allem*, especially for the houses they had initially built.

....renovating a house you built some ten years ago was as if I was dressing my young son *tūb al 'aīd* [a new gown for the festival]. It was a real pleasure to do so. You laugh to yourself when you remember the days when this house was being built, as if in a dream, every new stone you put brings a different memory. You tend to put your heart, your blood and flesh with the new stones and mortar when renovating the thing [the house]. (*Mu'Allem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

---

<sup>14</sup> As in the traditional saying in such occasions: *sīmāhum fī wudjīthum* [A fair face (good-looking house) cannot have a crabbed heart (contents = family)].

### 9.2.10. *Twāzūn kā twāzūn al-'insān* (Equilibrium, balance as that of man)

Do not make me a house with a *madjlis* [reception room] that would carry forty people and a *mabīt* [living/bed-room] that carries only two. Do you know someone who has five eyes and two noses? Your houses today are like men from the moon. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 12, 1990).

...Look: *al zāi'd akhu al nāgiṣ* [lit. too much of something is exactly as too little of it], so always remember that *khair al umūr al wasaṭ* [the best solution lies between two extremes]. (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).<sup>15</sup>

Stemming from the traditional Ḥedjāzī belief that a house is like a human body, in that every *jerm* (body) has the same principle and organization and yet "*every house in Ḥedjāz and every room were as different as the palm of our hands.*"<sup>16</sup> To achieve a structural, formal and functional balance in a family house, reminiscent of that of the human body was the aim and hope of every *mu'allem*: "*The hand would wash, eat, hit, lift, write, plead...etc, and so would other parts of your body. Why then should we confine these parts to a single function!*"<sup>17</sup>

Again we find that there were a number of levels on which this criterion operated. The lowest of these levels was observed in the construction of the house: the symmetry and balance of plan arrangement, orientation of the house, the location of staircase-shaft/s, and positioning of windows in plan and façades. The highest level of operating under this criterion was in the perception of the house - as a whole - as a human body were the arrangement of rooms symbolically represented the head (family private quarters), the body (family living rooms and apartments) and the legs (reception areas)<sup>18</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> Modified by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin from a traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb.

<sup>16</sup> This particular statement was repeated several times by a number of my interviewees. However, it is mentioned here by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin. (Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 9, 1990.

<sup>18</sup> This part of the house would never be described by a traditional Ḥedjāzī as resembling the *ridjil* (n.pl. *ridjūl* = foot) because of the negative connotation of this part of the human body (being the lowest), and its association with footwear. Instead it would be likened to *al-sāg* (n.pl. *sīgān* = the legs) or *al-sīsān* (n.pl. *al-sās* = the foundation).



In this metaphoric perception that we see in chapter seven, we find that buildings shared the names of men, and that the house could not have been imagined with a missing part, just as a normal body could not. The traditional Ḥedjāzī builders were expressing the commonly-felt relationship between the perfection of man's creation, its equilibrium, and the place that housed it, as well as the functions that both had to perform. We also see that the house had an important role to play in the process of enhancing the balance of man and creating his home. The end product, with its meanings, confirms that the criteria used by the *mu'allemin* shaped the house as something much more than just a shelter.

### 9.3. Tolerance and extent of change within the traditional Ḥedjāzī house

#### 9.3.1. The role and perception of *mu'allemin* in the house production

To the owner, the house was a place of freedom and peace, the source of his pride and happiness, his home in the universe, and the other things described in chapter eight. He was not himself directly involved in the design and building processes of the house (as discussed in chapter six), and most of the credit for the achievement of all this was given to the *mu'allemin* who had put such careful thought and ingenuity into the house's 'creation'<sup>19</sup>. His aim was to achieve the best balance in terms of the considerations involved, such as the socio-cultural requirements, climatic factors, availability of building materials, construction technology and so on. His ideas reflected a habit of practical response that interpreted the common institutionalised framework.

Moreover, the *mu'allemin*, as a fully integrated member of the community, had a special affection for the houses he built. This is shown by the fact that during construction, the site of the house was named after the *mu'allemin* who was building it (e.g., *bait al-Karkāchin* means the house *mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah was working on) until the moment the owner took over the building when it immediately became associated

---

<sup>19</sup> No *mu'allemin* voiced feelings of pride openly. I inferred such feelings from the interviewees' tone. This diffidence is understandable since to claim pride in creativity is disapproved of as in the terms of a well known proverb: "*mādiḥ nafsuh iblīs [only the devil would praise himself]*." This reflects the common Ḥedjāzī perception that 'creation' is the domain of God. They were "*mere servants of God*" who gave them the knowledge and ability to "*make things*."

with his own family name. This recognition, in such institutionalized form, of a passage of spiritual ownership, emphasizes the importance of the house in the life of various members of the community, especially the *mu'allemin*.

A *mu'allemin* remained strongly attached in sentiment to the houses he spent a number of years building. He marked special events or stages of his life by the houses he built and remembered, especially those which required particular effort or technical expertise. He might refer to the house of a certain family as "*el-bait ellī shāff youm zawādjī* [the house that saw him married]," or of another as "*ellī shāff awwal bizeratī* [the one that saw the birth of his first child],"... etc. Each of the houses he built represented a part of his life. A sequence of memorable events in such a man's life was marked by his creation of structures which had an identity much as he had himself.

As discussed in chapter six and earlier in this chapter, in the initial stage of *talbīq al-'arḍ* (matching a 'design' with the plot of land), the *mu'allemin* had to consult with the client in the most comprehensible terms since the client's knowledge of and involvement in the production process was limited and indirect. In similar fashion, the *mu'allemin* had to intercede in disputes between home owners in a number of cases, the most common of which were those of extensions threatening the collapse of another building or of the intrusion on the privacy of one house by neighbouring doors or windows. The building control thus exercised imposed a particular responsibility but also conferred a special respect upon senior *mu'allemin*.

In such respects, the role played by *mu'allemin* in the production of houses was more intellectual than emotional. They were known by the Turkish authorities of 19th century *Ḥedjāz* as *aṣḥab al-khibrah wa al ma'rifah* (proficient, experienced or intelligent ones). As a knowledgeable person, the *mu'allemin* saw himself as a public servant, not only because of his ability to 'put a roof on people's heads,' but also because of his professional involvement with the community throughout the duration of the building process and, in the later stages of development when he was asked to interpret building codes and regulations. He was expected to know the traditions of the building industry and the principles or guidelines (*'urf: n.pl. a'raf*) that had been followed and respected throughout the years. As discussed later in this chapter, he was the regulator of a process of change which was an essential aspect of person-home

interaction. He controlled the mechanisms by which individuals, communities and the whole culture balanced continuity and change<sup>20</sup>.

The *mu'allemin* of traditional Ḥedjāz saw themselves as a controlling mechanism, a 'safety valve' whereby the changes in society's customs, symbols, norms and beliefs were expressed in architectural form. Translating these values throughout their evolution into concrete form, preserved and protected continuity of cultural expression down the generations - and these gradations of change are visible today, going back more than three hundred years.

The *mu'allemin*, having actively and creatively developed their craft in formal apprenticeships, cultivated a flexibility towards their work. As discussed later in the chapter, the creative intellectual effort involved in the development of the *mu'allemin's* skills and knowledge enabled them to reconcile and incorporate non-traditional forms and symbols into the established local tradition.

The reader will notice that throughout the past few chapters there has been quite an emphasis on the role played by the traditional *mu'allemin* of Ḥedjāz in comparison to that of clients. Though individual house designs and forms might result from individual decisions, they added up to the acts of a whole community and to an integrated whole. Otherwise than in recognition of this, how would one expect the *mu'allemin* to produce houses for such communities? As discussed in chapter six and earlier in this chapter, they understood the needs of their clients in ways which were lived rather than learned:

...one hand doesn't clap, you need two or may be more to make a real noise [a good job]. I did not think alone, for not only did I have assistants who would always suggest something here and something there, but I had the whole *ḥāra* to worry about. (*Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

The *mu'allemin's* involvement in his society was so comprehensive that even his personal talent, or rather its use, was socially 'regulated.' The above statement by the *mu'allemin* means that the members of his *ḥāra* were actually, even in their absence, thinking on his behalf, for if he did not consider them during the design and

---

<sup>20</sup> The *mu'allemin's* superior knowledge of the *a'rāf* (guidelines) was in large measure due to the accumulated experience of generations.

building processes, the possibility was that they would not like or accept what he built. They were in essence thinking *with* him. The canons of 'design' were inculcated into the minds of every craftsman involved, whether builder, carpenter or stone-carver, through the master-apprentice form of artisan training. These canons, which reflected a series of religious beliefs and the broad cultural ethos, provided guidance on every practical level as well as on aesthetic and symbolic interpretations.

According to these *mu'allemin*, building houses was, traditionally, a communal undertaking until a division of labour gradually emerged where the *mu'allemin* became accountable for the accomplishment of the task. From this point, the evolution of the form of the traditional Hedjazi house was the work of individuals, modified by social and physical factors through the course of time. But the designer and builder of the Hedjazi house, in its creation, expressed thoughts that were common to his group, and were based upon collective and communal experience. As such the design of the traditional Hedjazi house and the evolution of its form, shape and space configuration was dual in nature: it was general and individual simultaneously.

However, it would be truly unrealistic to believe that all the traditional *mu'allemin* were mere contractors or 'technicians.' Each of the *mu'allemin* combined in his characteristics his experience, background, the influence of his former *mu'allemin*, his own 'artistic' merits and ambitions; in short, a distinct 'individuality.' When a *mu'allemin* designed and built, he was naturally bound to do so in accordance with the 'individuality' he represented and reflect this in the houses he 'created.' While most of the traditional Hedjazi *mu'allemin* are gone, the houses they have left behind them still have echoes of their presence.

The *mu'allemin's* statement that "*Al mu'allemin al fannan yiban men jadrowatū* [the skill and artistic merit of the builder is displayed in his walls]," suggests that - regardless of the client's budget - the house as a whole could reveal whether the builder was an imaginative one or just a good but uninspired technician<sup>21</sup>. The *mu'allemin* were able to judge whether the work was executed with unassuming skill

---

<sup>21</sup> The word *fannan* in Arabic, includes an array of meanings such as artistic, expert, skilful, and thoughtful. However, in the traditional Hedjazi sense, it was mainly used to refer to the inherent inner qualities of a *mu'allemin*, which were beyond his acquired basic structural knowledge and expertise. As such *al-mu'allemin al-fannanin* is a category that only encompassed naturally-gifted builders and not necessarily well-trained ones.

and sympathy or as a self-conscious assertion of cleverness:

The moment I touch the walls I could tell you if the *bannā kān wāḥid mu'alletm*, *wallā wāḥid yibghālū yit'alam* [the builder was a true *mu'alletm* or someone who needs to learn a great deal more]. (*Mu'alletm* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).<sup>22</sup>

The evident consciousness of such comparisons also suggests that the *mu'alletmīn* were fully aware of their roles as 'designers' in the production of houses as opposed to that of 'contractors.' However, it must be clarified that only a certain class of *mu'alletm* fell into the category of *fannān* (skilful). As discussed in chapter five, each Ḥedjāzī town had one or two representatives of this class.

"*Al jūd min al maudjūd, wa fāqīd alshā' lā yo 'tīh* [lit. He who does not have it cannot give it]," was a common phrase among the *mu'alletmīn* of Ḥedjāz, which says that the artistic merits of the *mu'alletm* must come from within. A 'creative' form will not emerge unless it is instinctive. If it does not show without artifice then he does not have a talent and he is a simple *bannā* or builder (as opposed to *mu'alletm*, which embraces the possession of a number of attributes, the most important being this instinctive creativity and the ability to deal instantaneously with problems).

...I could look at a piece of land, and would immediately have a picture, a vision, of what the desired house would look like, and most of the time, I could actually walk around in this *fikrah* [vision, picture, idea] and look through the windows of the house to see myself and my client standing down there and talking to each other. I looked at my client's face while he was talking to me, and I could see in my imagination him praying with his son in the *madjlis*, and I saying to myself that there should be no *rowshān* with a person sitting inside it while this man is praying...and I blanked out the image of the *rawāshīn* and toilets from the direction of the *qiblah* [Makkah direction]. I sometimes laugh to myself when I think of how I saw a little child playing on my clients back while he was praying...because I knew that his son was not married yet and this child was yet to be born. (*Mu'alletm* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

Throughout the interviews with the *mu'alletmīn*, signs of the employment of man's basic 'design' faculties were evident. Intuition, instinct and imagination were

---

<sup>22</sup> This is also an indication of the *mu'alletm's* visual memory and ability to imagine creatively, combining the components that went to make up his houses in ways he was conscious of before the beginning of the house production process.



applied under different circumstances and as the need arose. Basic houses required the least technical knowledge to construct, yet great imagination and fine instincts were demanded in order, for example, to achieve more space per room, or to allow more breeze and light into a restricted area. Compared to the duration of the production of a traditional house, reaction for most new problems must have been infinitesimal.

*"It came to my mind one day to make a recess in the façade resembling a skylight but without reaching the sky."* This was *mu'allem* Şaḍāqah Karkāchin's statement, referring to such instances as where a new idea might be conceived while he was away from the site. According to the *mu'allem*, such an idea *"opened the door for more problems to pour on [his] head,"* such as, presumably privacy maintenance and the like. Such an attempted innovation would not be 'drawn' on the ground in the usual way, but retained in his head, given a chance to *tistawī* (mature), and later communicated to his foreman to execute. The client would be informally appraised of the idea prior to its execution, and the response would be generally favourable.

Whilst this may suggest that the building tradition of Ḥedjāz was open to 're-creation' in the hand of the *mu'allem*, there was a dividing line between the freedom exercised by the *mu'allem* and the need to satisfy the expectations of the client, which though never clearly or specifically defined, was based on a common understanding. The strength or weakness of expression of the prevalent traditions and values did however depend on the instinctive capabilities of the *mu'allem* though the general principles that sustained tradition did not rigidly constrict or compromise the desires of clients. Rather, from their point of view, this tradition realised a means by which the house became a physical representation of the accepted socio-cultural rules and conventions.

From the *mu'allem's* point of view, the process of interpreting what was culturally-acceptable drew on cognitive and symbolic social information to create a 'design' which emerged from the cultural setting, but also added a personal 'touch' to the already established cultural form. Traditional 'design' principles were drawn from interpretations of cultural meaning and context. The *mu'allemīn's* understanding of what constituted a culturally-appropriate 'design' was not simply a matter of drawing on knowledge of past traditions, but also involved sensitivity to social - and gradual - cultural change. This latter facilitated the generation of new forms which



were readily accepted by society because of their respect for and adherence to the past and their sympathetic approach to the present.

The individuality of the *mu'allemin* that we discussed earlier does not mean that they had a 'style' of their own. They simply had to get along with their own creative stamina. They ranged along the whole front of occurring problems in their pursuit of appropriate forms. Gradually, the characteristics of their particular approaches became apparent. These were consistent with the spiritual and material characteristics of the society and time, changing, much like any other socio-cultural feature of Ḥedjāz, only gradually. Only those features which represented and reflected the inner values and the emotions of the people were retained; the rest were forgotten.

Through the course of time, individual ingenuity was required to provide for newly-emerging socio-cultural and physical necessities as in the traditional proverb: "*Likul zmān daulah wa ridjāl, wu kull wagt wulū adān* [lit. every epoch has its men and country, and every prayer time has its call]." In other words, the *mu'allemin* was referring to the nature of change in the needs and desires of the community through time, and the means required to fulfil them. Although most needs could be satisfied on any pre-existing basis, ingenuity was often required to set new standards of acceptability thereby creating a new 'need' when desirability was recognized through common approval. The need to constantly refer to the accepted norms obliged whoever had a new idea to have community approval before his innovation was given social legitimacy as expressed by the traditional proverb: "...*gīs gabl al ghaṭīṣ* [lit. check the depth of the water before you dive]." This may sound today like an intolerable restriction on personal freedom. It was the case, however, that in traditional Ḥedjāz, satisfying one's own desires was conditioned by presenting a socially-acceptable front to one's neighbours so as to dispel the fear of estrangement from the group or any accusation of ridiculing or ignoring more widely prevailing social norms through breaches of conventions.

For example, when the *ḥaramdināt* or balconies were first introduced into Ḥedjāz, they were an idea borrowed to please the owner of a particular house. Had the idea of the balcony, let us say, not gained the approval of the community, even after a reasonable period of time - many ideas were introduced prematurely - the *mu'allemin* and the owner of the house would retreat to a tactful compromise. The

*mu'allemin* would claim that the balcony was structurally deteriorating and had to be removed because it represented a certain danger. It would then be replaced by another device which might be a cross between an already-approved window and a balcony, say like a 'rowshān without the lattice work.' To put it in *mu'allemin* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin's words: "...look: *al zāi'd akhu al nāgiş* [lit. too much of something is exactly as too little of it], so always remember that *khair al umūr al wasaṭ* [the best solution lies between two extremes]." So the community would be handled gently and discreetly, but not ignored. Even if the 'inventor' of the idea had been the genius of his time, he had to advance at the rate and pace of his community (Fig. 9.1.).

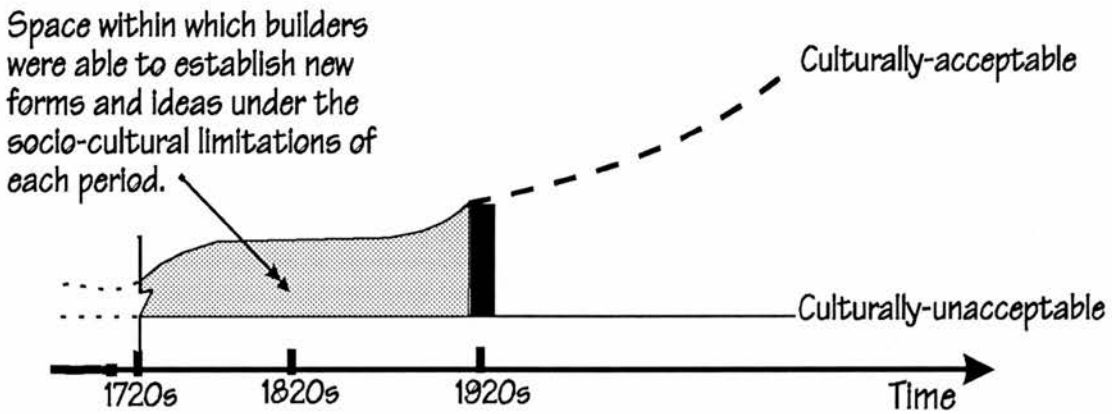


Fig. 9.1. *Mu'allemin's* ability to experience new ideas varied with the culturally-accepted matrix of the time.

Behind any successfully executed idea in Ḥedjāz, there were common needs, common sentiments, and an appreciative society. Many an idea did not see the light because of the absence of one of these three. My main source of information and one of Ḥedjāz most resourceful and adventurous builders - *mu'allemin* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin - had to "restrain his imagination" at times because he knew that some of his ideas would not be readily accepted. In doing so, he acted as his own societal 'filter of acceptability' and quality control. However, the general societal attitude and belief that poorly 'designed' houses could make the performance of culturally-consistent activities difficult, while good house 'designs' could enhance them, encouraged most Ḥedjāzīs to approach new ideas with caution rather than fear.

*Mu'allemin*, who were trained to judge experiences by their usefulness, saw that imaginative thinking was not only pleasurable in itself, but also important in shaping future houses. They considered some of the ideas that were radical at a certain time, suitable for serving a purpose in later life when their visions might achieve

reality: "save the white piaster for the black day."<sup>23</sup> These ideas were stored in their heads and hatched when the right moment came: "*ilī yoşbor yinūl, ...akl al 'unab ḥabba ḥabba* [lit. who has patience will gain at the end...to finish a cluster of grapes, you must eat one grape at a time]."<sup>24</sup> No *mu'allem* was able to predict when this might be or define the conditions, but most of them agreed that it occurred on site and instantaneously, as we see earlier in the building process. "*Hands were better than heads sometimes*,"<sup>25</sup> said *mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, meaning that when an idea was executed spontaneously on site, it was bolder and less frustrating than day-dreaming in the coffee-house.

...*al-mu'allem ellī māhū wākī* [who is not in command of his craft or lacks self-confidence] could be satisfied with a poorly-imagined house, and keeps repeating it<sup>26</sup>. He will tell you that *min khāf silim* [he who is afraid will not take risks]. You may say Ok: *rīḥat abū 'alī walā 'adamū* [lit. at least they were available]. But the fact is that those who were afraid to act and did not believe in their work did not last for long, they were simply not recommended....sometimes the best cure comes from the point of the needle. (*Mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

Because more complicated ideas may have been more difficult to turn into reality, and because people had different concepts of what constituted reality, it took experience and intuition for the introduction of new ideas to succeed. Only those *mu'allemīn* and clients, whose imagination had been well developed could understand how to link their ideas with the society's. An experienced senior *mu'allem* was always aware of his connection with other times and places. He used his imagination not to change the past or to be imprisoned by it, or to avoid the future, but, as a "home-builder" should, to improve the present.

One of the virtues of the traditional *mu'allemīn* of Ḥedjāz was that their schemes and ideas were not kept private. They shared ideas and consulted each other

---

<sup>23</sup> This and the following statements by *mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin were modified from traditional Ḥedjāzī proverbs. (Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> Also equivalent to 'where there is a will there is a way.'

<sup>25</sup> *Mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 8, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> This statement implies that the *mu'allem* who was not the master of his craft would repeat the forms of a poorly designed house without realizing or daring to face his mistakes.

regardless of competition for fame or material gain. The Ḥedjāzī *mu'allemin* also borrowed ideas and techniques from neighbouring countries which were mostly the product of master builders in these countries (notably Yemen, Egypt and Syria). What seemed to matter to *mu'allemin* was the form these took rather than from whence they came or how they originated. Figure (9.2.) illustrates the reciprocal relationships between the *mu'allemin* and the society, which regulated the process of continuity and change in traditional Ḥedjāz. As soon as a new architectural element was introduced, it was subjected to the culturally-accepted matrix for 'approval.' In most cases, these borrowed ideas had to be modified so as to suit the local Ḥedjāzī socio-cultural requirements, and were either rejected, modified and given a local name, or were slightly changed while retaining their original name<sup>27</sup>.

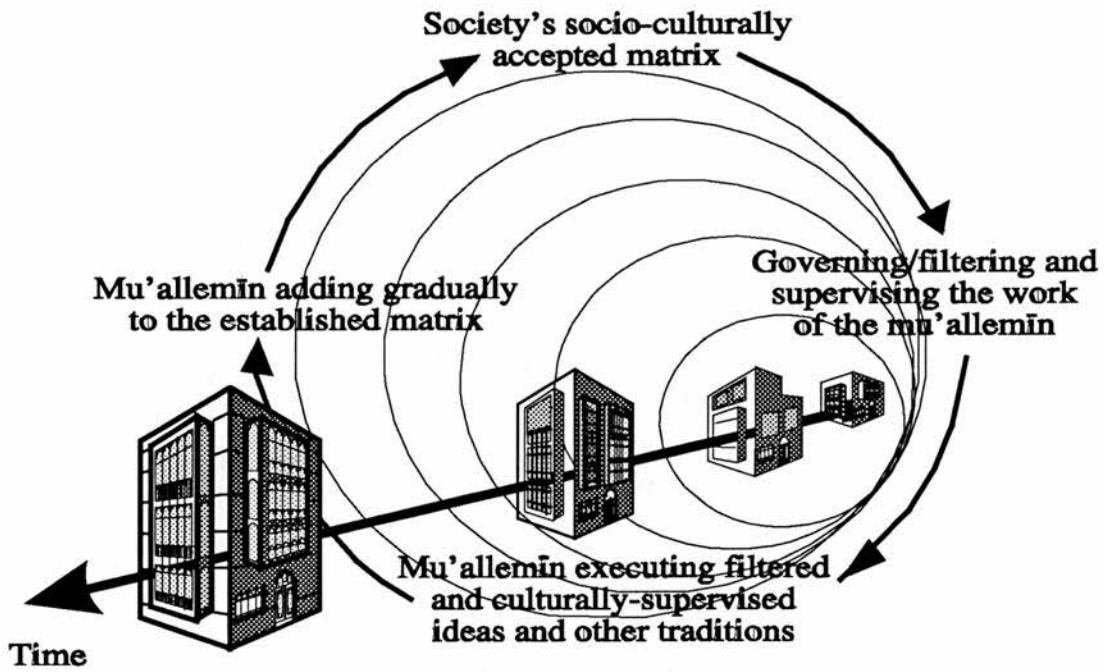


Fig. 9.2. The reciprocal relationship between the *mu'allemin* and the society.

But a large imaginative capacity must confront the hard facts of lack of building materials, biased clients, societal disapproval and the like. These factors would hinder the most imaginative of clients or the most skilled of *mu'allemin* from

<sup>27</sup> It also happened that the travelling Ḥedjāzīes either modified and adapted architectural elements that they saw during their travels, or they brought terms more suitable for describing elements they already had. Examples of such cases were the Egyptian *mashrabiyyah* which became the Ḥedjāzī *rowshān* (although the latter is originally Persian = *rawzana*), the Greek *dihlīz*, the Persian *qubbah*, *īwān*,...etc. See Ibrahim, Laila Ali Turkish Terms in Mamluk Architecture. Abstract. Unpublished manuscript.

executing their ideas as fully as they would like. It is there that they drew the line: "you would usually close the door that brings you blowing winds...but in most cases our hands were tied already," protested the *mu'allemin* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin<sup>28</sup>. On the other hand, they believed that such difficulties had to be expected if continuity was to be maintained.

What we have seen might give the impression that most *mu'allemin* felt a constant urge to introduce new ideas for their own sake. The fact is that *mu'allemin* were concerned to 'gradualise' change within their tradition to maintain its survival: *khud min al tll yikhtl* [lit. if you keep digging the hill, it will collapse].<sup>29</sup> In other words, unrestricted licence to ignore the societal norms and conventions would lead to total social disintegration. This was exactly what *mu'allemin* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin meant when he referred to the Ḥedjāzī rush to modernity in the middle 1900s: "*what the ant [tradition] collected in a year, the camel [modernity] squashed with its foot.*"<sup>30</sup>

Some aspects of the picture presented here may appear rather exaggerated as a result of an emphasis which I have given to data, that informants themselves treated as unpretentious matters of cultural assumptions. I made a decision to include such data to provide a comprehensive treatment of material which has not hitherto been the subject of published research. Even the minor details concerning the role of the *mu'allemin* in the process of producing the traditional Ḥedjāzī house I have extrapolated from, as far as permissible, to present the true significance of much that was otherwise understated but nonetheless of central cultural importance.

#### 9.4. Traditional design criteria

In this part I feel obliged to be as brief as possible in my analysis since most of the data presented were dealt with in previous chapters to serve different purposes.

---

<sup>28</sup> *Mu'allemin* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 12, 1990.

<sup>29</sup> A traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb.

<sup>30</sup> Originally a traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb used here by *mu'allemin* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin to suit his purpose. (*Mu'allemin* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 14, 1990).



I will instead concentrate on the terminologies used by my interviewees either as design criteria or as mere descriptions of the qualities of their desired houses that were not demonstrated elsewhere. It is also important here to emphasize that the traditional Ḥedjāzīes in general are very careful when they describe houses, as this description would naturally point to the characteristics of the family that dwells in the house; their personal taste, values, social identity and so on. However, when it could be clarified to the person describing the house that the discussion points directly to it as a physical entity, as a structure, an image or an idea, closer and more accurate descriptions could be obtained as it was the case during the course of the interviews for this research.

A handsome house is like a well-mannered, well-brought up and well-dressed child. It is a running charity that everyone who lives in it, visits it or simply looks at it would say "*that which Allāh come to pass, there is no strength save in Allāh, may God preserve the hands that built it, may God forgive and be most kind to the man who put his effort in making it.*" (Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

My home is almost all that I own in this life. If I built it well, it will treat me well and will enhance the remaining days of my life, just like ones *bizūrah* [seeds= children]. (al-Makkī, May 18, Jeddah, 1990).

Here we find an emphasis on describing a good or beautiful house as one's children. From the traditional Ḥedjāzī point of view, regarding the house as something as dear, lovable and vital to one's life is quite natural. The house accumulated such characteristics in the past for a number of reasons that were discussed in chapter eight (i.e., embodiment). But the most striking of this resemblance between the house and one's offspring is beauty, youth, strength, hope and aspiration that were traditionally associated with both. Traditional Ḥedjāzīes expected their houses to be beautiful and 'well-dressed,' just like their children.

We also see in chapters six and eight - and earlier in this chapter - that newness, straight edges, aligned walls, solid foundation, proper implementation of new or creative design ideas, ornamented wood-work, original or indigenous designs, proportioned elevation treatment and the like, were amongst the merits of any house built in traditional Ḥedjāz. If a house exhibited a greater number of these qualities, the work of the *mu'allem* who produced it was considered beautiful or *shughul jamīl*. However, these qualities were not given equal values, or emphasis. The relative beauty



of a building was determined by such qualities that had a direct effect on its inhabitants, the neighbouring houses, and/or observers. As such, these qualities could be categorized as internal, external and general qualities, where the internal refer to those affecting the inhabitants of the house, the external are those qualities that were felt by the rest of the community, and the general ones are those that both house-dwellers and outsiders could feel, see or touch.

To detect some of these qualities, let us recollect some of the opinions of traditional Ḥedjāzīes about the internal qualities that they wanted to have in their homes in order to make them beautiful. Remember that we are mainly referring here to physical (architectural) qualities that would not include, for example, the happiness of the family or the integration of its members that we discussed in the previous chapter :

First of all, you will find that everyone wants... a house which has large rooms with generous headroom [high ceilings], large decorated rawāshīn [bay-windows], decent-sized ornamented two-leaf doors, cool and clean terraces, covered balconies with wooden arches, dignified and well furnished reception-rooms with large openings and an entrance sitting-platforms topped with mattresses... (Mu 'allem Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

... when I want to sleep, I want to find it cool, dim and quiet,...(al-Makkī, May 18, Jeddah, 1990).

My home was my entire life... I told [my husband] that I wanted a well-lit and ventilated kitchen and a large living room, because we were a large family...(al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

In this representative sample, we find that size, decoration, coolness, cleanness, quality furniture, light and acoustics control were of primary importance to my respondents. However, the size of the house and its furniture were considered as personal matters that differed from one family to the other in Ḥedjāz, and were regarded in most cases as optional (as discussed in the following chapter). The remaining interior qualities were emphasised in a number of occasions for their extreme importance to all traditional Ḥedjāzīes, hence are also regarded in chapter ten as constants.

There were a number of descriptions that were used by either *mu'allemin* or clients to refer to these interior qualities, which included space configuration, decorations, wood-work, furniture arrangement,...etc. These descriptions included terms like *shughul badī'* (wonderful, admirable work), *badrāmīṭ*, *mubagga'* (mongrel, spotty), *bāriḥ*, *mubaḥbaḥ*, or *murīḥ* (unrestricted, spacious), *baṭrān* (lavish, showy), *makhdūm* (flushed, levelled-up), *murtadjal*; *murammag* (improvised, patched-up) and *rāiyyig*, *alā al rāiyyig* (articulate, translucent) among others. It is worth mentioning here that because the interior of the house, as far as colour schemes, arrangement of furniture and quality of domestic objects fell within the domain of women, and because of the cultural sensitivity of the issue of describing people's interior spaces after one was welcomed in these houses, it was of extreme importance to my interviewees to convey these qualities in a very cautious and respectful manner<sup>31</sup>.

The external qualities included elevation treatment, arrangement of wooden components on the façades, proportions, alignment of walls, design quality, plaster, mortar and brick works. Expressions used were as follows: *Shughul bādikh* (high, lofty, elevated work), *abdjar* (big-bellied, discordant), *'uṣūlī* (by the book, complying with the prevalent rules), *'awādim*, *zai al-nāss* (customary, traditional, conventional), *bāriz* (projecting, protruding, salient), *bā'iss/baṭṭāl* (bad, worthless), *baṣmadjiyyah* (reproducers, imitators), *baṭrān* (lavish, showy)<sup>32</sup>, *dardja 'ulā* (first class), *gharīb*, *dakhīl* (extraneous, alien, unfamiliar), *maḥbūk* (bound), *maḥkūr*, *ḥukkur* (well-done, complete), *maḥsūb*, *marsūm bilmisṭarah* (calculated), *mā'lūff*, *mu'tād* (familiar, native), *marṣūḍ* (well-observed, balanced), *matīn* (solid, laborious), *mat'ūb 'alaih* (far-fetched), *mauzūn* (balanced, straight), *muba'ṭar* (scattered, dispersed).

The last category, that is the general quality of the house, which included external and internal qualities were described as follows: *Shughul mauṣūff* (prescribed, recommended), *mū baṭṭāl*; *lā bā'ss bū* (not bad, mediocre), *mū'dī* (unfavourable, harmful, offensive), *mekhastak* (indisposed, not well), *nadīf* (clean, honest, flawless,

---

<sup>31</sup> In all cases I was asked not mention the name of the person describing these houses, especially when the house being evaluated was identified with a certain family name. Here I refrained from mentioning any names because of the irrelevancy of doing so to the issue presented.

<sup>32</sup> The meaning of the term *baṭrān* (lavish or showy), depended on the context of the sentence to refer to a certain characteristic of a house or a person. For example, it could be used to mean strong, courageous, and fearless, or it could be used to refer to a very negative characteristic like ungrateful, reckless and arrogant.

long-lasting), *namūzadjī* (exemplary, model), *rastakkah*, *rastaq* (replenished, well off, flush), *tarmīg*, *ṭalṣagah* (patchwork, commercial), *tā'nnī* (meticulous, careful), *rāsī*, *rākiz* (anchored, stable, firm), *'aṣīl* (firmly rooted), *mūnaḍam* (ordered, harmonious) and so on<sup>33</sup>.

The following table (Fig. 9.T1.), provides a more detailed list of these terminologies and their use in the traditional architectural criticism or evaluation. The reader will notice that there are no references in the table to qualities like youth or newness for these were embedded in expressions like solid, firm, strong, balanced and anchored, which were considered as characteristics of young people or new artifacts. Also as we note earlier, houses that displayed opposing aesthetic qualities and values were strongly condemned but hardly in public.

Design Criteria	Lit. Meaning	Meaning	Use
<i>Shughul abdjar</i>	Big-bellied/discordant	Distorted/unbalanced	Design
<i>Shughul 'aṣīl</i>	Original/genuine	Creative/established	Design
<i>Shughul badrāmī/mubaga'</i>	Mongrel/spotty	Varied/eclectic	Design
<i>Shughul bāriḥ/mubahbah or murīḥ</i>	Comfortable/roomy/spacious	Unrestricted (e.g., by a budget)	Design
<i>Shughul gharīb/dakhīl</i>	Alien/infiltrating	Extraneous/unfamiliar	Design
<i>Shughul baṣmadjiyyah</i>	Reproducers/imitators	Repetitive/copied	Design/woodwork
<i>Shughul makhhlūṭ</i>	Intermixed	Confused/commingled/not conforming to the matrix	Design
<i>Shughul mā'lūff/mu'ād</i>	Regular/familiar	Local/indigenous	Design
<i>Shughul muba'jar</i>	Scattered/Dispersed	Disconnected/not harmonious	Design
<i>Shughul rastakkah (rastaq)</i>	Replenished/well off/flush	Cautious/imaginative	Design
<i>Shughul rāiyyig/alā al rāiyyig</i>	Clear-minded	Articulate/thoughtful	Design
<i>Shughul bāriz</i>	Projecting/protruding/salient	Distinguished	General
<i>Shughul bā'iss/baṭṭāl</i>	Sad/miserable	Bad/worthless	General
<i>Shughul baṭrān</i>	Thoughtless/care-free	Lavish/showy	General

<sup>33</sup> A number of very general expressions that were used by my interviewees were omitted from the table. For example: *Shughul ṭaiyyib* [good, nice work] and its opposite *shughul mū ṭaiyyib* [not good, not nice], *shughul 'ifish* [indelicate, repulsive], and the like.

<i>Shughul bizimhah</i>	With integrity and honesty	Meticulous/painstaking	General
<i>Shughul dardja 'ulā</i>	First class	flawless/vigorous	General
<i>Shughul 'ausūlī</i>	By the book/complying with rules	Authentic:conforming to the culturally-accepted matrix	General
<i>Shughul 'awādim/zai al-nāss</i>	People's work	Customary/conventional	General
<i>Shughul badī'</i>	Wonderful/admirable	Innovative	General
<i>Shughul maḥkūr/Hukkur</i>	Well-done	Holistic/refined	General
<i>Shughul mat 'ūb 'alaih</i>	Far-fetched/tedious	Laborious	General
<i>Shughul mauṣūff</i>	Prescribed/recommended	Characteristic/outstanding	General
<i>Shughul mā baṭṭāl/lā bā'ss bū</i>	Not bad/mediocre	Insignificant/tolerable	General
<i>Shughul mā'dī</i>	Harmful/offensive	Faulty	General
<i>Shughul mūnaḍam</i>	Organised/ordered	Holistic/even/harmonious	General
<i>Shughul namūzadjī</i>	Exemplary/model	Prototype	General
<i>Shughul ta 'bān</i>	Sick	Weak/inadequate	General
<i>Shughul badikh</i>	Costly	High/lofty/elevated	Structural
<i>Shughul maḥbūk</i>	Well-bound	Secured	Structural
<i>Shughul maḥsūb/marsūm bilmisṭarah</i>	Calculated/drawn by the ruler	Accurate/precise	Structural
<i>Shughul makhbūṣ</i>	Mixed/mingled/muddled	Diverse/indiscriminate	Structural
<i>Shughul makhdūm</i>	Served	Flushed/levelled-up/aligned	Structural
<i>Shughul marṣūḍ</i>	Observed/calculated	Balanced	Structural
<i>Shughul matīn</i>	Solid/strong	Stable/massive	Structural
<i>Shughul mekhastak</i>	Sick/not well	Indisposed/flimsy	Structural
<i>Shughul murtadjal/murammag</i>	Improvised/patched-up	Insensible/careless/undeveloped	Structural
<i>Shughul rāsī/rākiz</i>	Anchored/stable	Firm/solid	Structural
<i>Shughul mauzūn</i>	Balanced/even	Balanced/steady/straight	Stone/brickwork
<i>Shughul nadīf</i>	Clean	Upright/flawless/durable	Stone/brickwork
<i>Shughul tarmīg/taṣṣagah</i>	Patchwork/sale work	Commercial/low quality	Stone/brick & woodwork
<i>Shughul tā'nnī</i>	Meticulous/Careful	Meticulous/Careful	Stone/brick & woodwork

<b>Design:</b> includes plan organization, elevation treatment, colour schemes, house orientation, unconventional ideas;
<b>General:</b> includes design and structure criticism;
<b>Structural:</b> includes foundation, wall alignment, brick or stone laying, wood work and engraving, plastering;
<b>Wood work:</b> includes design of elements, quality of structure, ornamentation;
<b>Stone, brickwork &amp; mortar:</b> includes trimming of stones or bricks, horizontality of <i>madāmīk</i> (courses of stones or bricks), amount of mortar used,...etc.

Table 9.T1. Traditional evaluation terminology.

According to the traditional Ḥedjāzīes, a beautiful (handsome) and authentic house should be harmonious, organised, indigenous, familiar, original, conventional, proportioned, structurally-sound with straight walls, firm and stable foundations. The reader might find a great deal of these terminologies rather general, vague or even contradicting. They were, in fact, clearly identified by those who conveyed them, especially as far as the use and context of terms were concerned<sup>34</sup>. From a modern point of view, these qualities may - rightly so to a certain extent - convey descriptions of architectural qualities of form, design or structure. Traditionally, however, they embodied ideals of family identities, history, religion, well-being, socio-cultural norms and values, as well as *mu'allemin's* own moral ethics.

For example, house façades may be the outcome of both the *mu'allemin's* and the client's artistic merits, and careful proportioning and selection of wooden components, but at the same time they were the projections of each person in the community and especially that of the family that owned the house. The same is true for house interiors which defined the inner-selves of both owners and builders. Therefore, the beautiful and authentic house must symbolize the architectural sense of the community and the moral values of that society. As we see earlier, these moral values operated on a number of levels, ranging from purely physical to purely spiritual qualities. Handsome and authentic houses gained their beauty and authenticity from these qualities and then, in turn, extended these qualities to their inhabitants and builders. As such, houses served as the standard of the whole community's ethics and moral values, and visually affirmed these social mores and ethical values that helped bind the community together.

<sup>34</sup> For example, the term *shughul 'aṣīl* (original or conventional) may indicate that any idea that is 'unconventional' would have a negative association as *shughul gharīb* (alien). However, the latter, when used in its proper context, would refer to a new idea that is far beyond the acceptability of the community, meaning that the pace of change in such a case was not sensibly considered by whomever introducing the idea. On the other hand, the former would refer to a new idea that is a gradual alteration of an already established or conventional architectural element and the like.

## Comment

The traditional Ḥedjāzī house was not only indigenous to the community that produced it, it was born within those who designed and built it. The code of ethics, that the traditional building guild operated in accordance with, was derived from years of experience, modified and strengthened from one generation of builders to the other as an essential component of the craft. Its main strength lies in the communality of its values, beliefs and ethics, not only between members of the guild, but also between the guild and the whole society. These 'born within' values and ethics guaranteed wholesomeness to traditional art and architecture, and to shared world views of the merits that constituted proper residential environments.

The local trend of architecture in traditional Ḥedjāz was a composite natural expression of many physical determinants on the one hand (climate, building materials, building knowledge and structural restraints) and non-physical components on the other (norms of accepted conduct, the prevailing social codes and aesthetic beliefs). These factors led the *mu'allemin* to implement creative and practical building solutions, none of which were meant to be 'artistic.' The outcome was a physical manifestation of the true Ḥedjāzī lifestyle. Domestic architecture was never viewed as a prominent specialty concerned only with the technical aspects of building science, but rather a total social craft, sensitive and receptive to man's feelings and needs. To 'build a roof over someone's head' was to socially cover him and his family from the eyes and to physically shelter them from the natural elements. The 'why' and the 'how' were almost common sense, while the 'what' was inclusively agreed upon. Therefore the final architectural cast of the house was never the impression of an individualistic expression, but rather the product of the motivations and common needs of a whole society.

The traditional Ḥedjāzī society provided itself as well as its builders with culturally-accepted norms of behaviours and architectural conventions. These were gradually modified and changed on a rate that was imperceptible. New ideas steadily found their ways into the domestic architecture and were incorporated into the previously established cultural matrix and so on, but in such a way that they were absorbed into the tradition and neither conflicted with it nor broke it. Likewise, the building techniques and solutions to problems were tried, repeated and, once proved



effective, were adopted as conventional norms. Accordingly, the *mu'allemin* became the guardians of change as well as its source.

New cultural ideas, when they emerged through the course of time, may have engendered the creation of new forms and spaces that were responsive to the altered cultural values<sup>35</sup>. In as much as houses were manifestations of what this culture deemed appropriate, they were mirrors of cultural values and were often an opportunity for questioning the degree to which the society's aspirations were matched by cultural achievements. As such, the authentic home, or the authenticity of 'being in the world' that the traditional Hedjāzīs valued, could only be experienced when there was a clear, balanced relation between the individual and the world to be experienced. The 'traditional' attitude of the Hedjāzī clients and *mu'allemin*, assured the society an architecture that developed very close to the borderline of what people themselves regarded as acceptable norms. This was also the result of the societal attitudes and values that guided and 'supervised' the behaviours of individuals to culturally-meaningful intentions and actions. Both attitudes were taken in an automatic fashion as a natural reaction of everyday life in Hedjāz.

The traditional Hedjāzī notion of architecture criticism and evaluation was not mainly concerned with forms and proportion as in the modern practice of architectural magazines. It was a common and more socially-concerned routine that did not require professionals or experts to conduct. As a service and social art that touched the lives of the whole society, the traditional Hedjāzī domestic architecture was everyone's business, hence, it required the involvement of the owners, their neighbours, passers-by, the *mu'allemin*, other craftsmen and their guilds. While this seems like an ideal architectural situation, it is however far removed from the modern case.

In the following chapter, we take this picture a step further and see how far this culturally-accepted matrix went in determining the constant and variable elements of a typical traditional Hedjāzī house. This analysis should help us to see how far a traditional Hedjāzī house could be changed without ceasing to be traditional. Once these elements are established, chapter eleven demonstrates how modern societal shifts

---

<sup>35</sup> As changing the mode of eating from the floor to low wooden tables *ṭabliyyāt*, when the latter became the norm, and so on. These may have required different space configuration to accommodate, or were assigned special rooms because they became immobile because of their size and weight.

in the perception of these elements reduced the home environment to a mere showcase. Chapter twelve gains from such investigation in its attempt to identify the notions of 'authenticity' in the production of a home environment that is culturally-rooted and respectful to the locality from which it emerges.

## CHAPTER TEN

### CONSTANT AND VARIABLE ELEMENTS IN THE TRADITIONAL ḤEDJĀZĪ HOUSE

## CHAPTER TEN

### CONSTANT AND VARIABLE ELEMENTS IN THE TRADITIONAL ḤEDJĀZĪ HOUSE

---

#### Introduction

The analysis of preferences and constraints (either socio-cultural or physical) could be the key to the question of how far could a traditional house be changed without ceasing to be traditional? These will not be analyzed in this chapter from an architectural point of view, but rather as a set of prerequisites for the emergence of a traditional Ḥedjāzī house as any individual within this context would perceive them (without which the traditional Ḥedjāzīs would not have imagined a house to be). For the sake of clarity in handling an otherwise complex and interrelated subject material, these factors (physical and non-physical) affecting the development of the house are divided into constant and variable categories<sup>1</sup>. These categories include elements which are physically indispensable (fixed) such as structures; re-arrangeable features (semi-fixed) like furniture<sup>2</sup>; and socio-cultural elements (non-fixed)<sup>3</sup> like values, meanings, verbal and non-verbal communication, behavioural patterns, movements and so on, all of which are essential to the making of home in traditional Ḥedjāz.

---

<sup>1</sup> Constant elements are those which were uniformly present and consistent throughout the towns of Ḥedjāz. The term is not used here to mean fixed or unchanged but rather to refer to invariable elements which were marked by continual and regular occurrence, operation and manifestation. These elements did not vary or change in their relationships with the other constituents of the house, including its dwellers. On the other hand, variable elements are those components of the house that were susceptible or subject to variation and change. They were marked by their diversity and inconstancy through the houses of traditional Ḥedjāz.

<sup>2</sup> These semi-fixed features of the house would also include its form, size, colour, furniture, and other external, movable fixtures (e.g., *mashrābiyyāt*). These were not considered by my informants as essentials, but the functions they performed were of extreme importance in any Ḥedjāzī house. For example, it was not the *mashrābiyyah* that gave the house its character, but the provision of privacy accomplished by it that mattered to the Ḥedjāzīs. Since most, if not all of these elements did not represent home necessities in Ḥedjāz, there were naturally not included here as constants.

<sup>3</sup> These categories are adopted from Amos Rapoport who conceptualized any given environment as consisting of fixed features (e.g., floors, walls), semi-fixed features (e.g., furnishings) and non-fixed features (e.g., people and their activities). See Rapoport, Amos. "Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings." *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space*. Ed. Susan Kent. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 9-20.

## 10.1. Constants and variables in the traditional Ḥedjāzī house

### 10.1.1. The constants

#### 10.1.1.1. Adherence to religion

It is not the new buildings that anger God the Almighty, it's the people and the money that build them which ruins what God made good at the beginning...everything that angers God comes from money...what is wrong with this era of yours is that you [modern Ḥedjāzīs] put God Almighty aside in the urgent pursuit of life's pleasures. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

This statement by the *mu'allem* was in an explicit sense, referring to the rush to respond to the allurements of modernity which the oil wealth precipitated. But in saying this he was setting the whole fabric of Ḥedjāzī religious life against questions of personal gains, advertised social status, affirmed sophistication, self-regarding, and worldliness. He also meant that the failure of the modern house was not the 'fault' of the building so much as that of society in general. He was referring to misplaced human values and the failure of individuals to recognize social obligations. He was suggesting that where the house was built and occupied by those who had God in their hearts, souls and minds, this would naturally be exhibited.

As shown in chapter one, the most pivotal feature of Ḥedjāzī cultural heritage was religion. All social conventions, norms and values turned on Islamic teaching as the basis of culture. Many customs and conventions made explicit reference to Islam, both to emphasise their value and to express how elemental religious observance was in traditional Ḥedjāzī life (Fig. 10.1.).

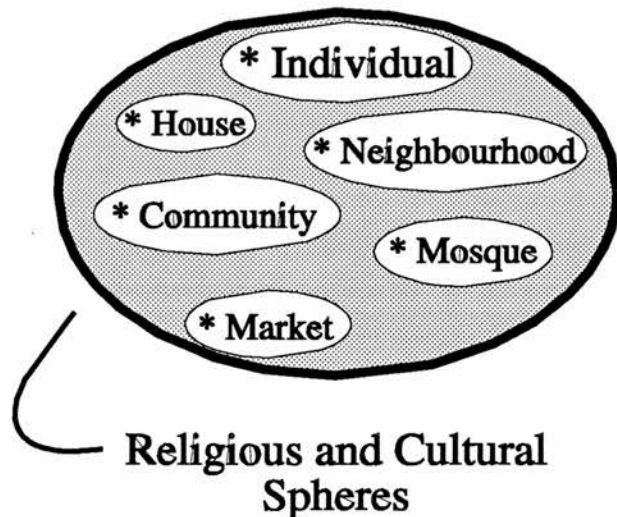


Fig. 10.1. Islam as the lifestyle of the traditional Ḥedjāzīs.

Adherence to the principles of Islam imposed responsibilities on believers as a

community as well as on an individual level. The modern concept of group identity, which is discussed in the following chapter, limits cohesion and is one which is totally rejected by Islamic principles of *ummah* (nation, group).

The design, building, and use of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house was based upon this religious sense of life, and from this were created the various environments. Adherence to Islamic principles in the past shaped development of the traditional cultural order. It is obvious that any close examination of the basic traits that characterized Islam will indicate that some of these traits were highly conducive to the establishment of Ḥedjāzī domestic architecture (e.g., privacy maintenance, neighbours rights and obligations, gender separation, hierarchy of age groups, orientation of rooms, façade treatment).

There were important virtues in religious adherence that all the traditional *mu'allemin* were conscious of and insisted upon throughout the interviews. The principle one was honesty: to be true to God, then themselves, their clients, building materials and structures...

To be honest and truthful is to be a good muslim, and to be a good *mu'allemin*...You could hide things from your wife to save your day, but you should never, never deceive your *zabūn* [client], your friends and colleagues. For example, *mizānāk fī albinnā'* [lit. your balance in construction = accuracy of structural measurement, choice of building materials and appropriateness of one's ideas to the purpose they will serve], must be extra precise...truth will prevent a lot of mischiefs from happening, and it will keep you from doing wrong things like claiming to be a knowledgeable *mu'allemin* when you are not...One can fool another man, but you will not be able to fool God Almighty. And what about *al-ḥadjar* [the stone]! This will fall on your head or you will fall on it, head first. (*Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

Honesty, in its aspects, as discussed in chapter nine, was enshrined in code of ethics that the *mu'allemin* abided by, and in chapter twelve we see how the traditional Ḥedjāzī perception of 'honesty' prevented *mu'allemin* from copying or imitating architectural forms and devices from other cultures without modifying them to suit the climate, landscape or available building materials and otherwise rendering them acceptable in context. This also encouraged the *mu'allemin* to be 'creative.'



*Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin* instanced some features of modern architecture which he attributed to a failure of religious adherence and described as "*challenge of God's laws*." One such is that of the house, glass-built in defiance of natural climatic conditions, where modern methods of temperature and ventilation controls have to compete with the basic disfunction. He maintained that even if air-conditioners were available at the time, his contemporaries would have thought twice before installing any in their houses. Not that it was religiously forbidden or culturally unacceptable to do so, but...

...because the Prophet (PBBH) said that even if one was washing oneself from a river, one should not abuse the water beyond the needs of washing oneself...I use air-conditioners in rooms where there is no other way to cool them because of the hellish heat discharged from 100 air-conditioners around my house. (*Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

This suggests that adherence to religion in traditional Ḥedjāz - while serving many other socio-cultural functions - provided the *mu'alleṃīn* with a higher reference and a codes of ethics to operate by. This applied in solving building disputes, controlling individual *mu'alleṃīn*'s conduct and practice, observing compatibility among neighbouring houses, satisfying the needs of privacy and determining the general cultural priorities of house construction. As we will see, all such aspects of development were governed in one way or another by the extent of religious adherence on the part of individuals and communities.

#### 10.1.1.2. Climatic consonance

When my great-grandfathers and yours advised us to "close the door against the gales if we want to have comfort," they were not only figuratively talking. They used an actual example that occupied the thoughts of Ḥedjāzīes for years: when will the sand blow from this direction? Which way to face your *madjālis* [reception areas]? And which to face *al-magā'id* [family sitting-areas]? What to wear? Where to get the proper fabrics and clothing for this unbearable heat? Where to sit? Which room was cooler and when? These poor people wasted their lives trying to find answers that were particular to each *ḥāra* in Ḥedjāz, not knowing that we were going to let go of all this for cold-air boxes that are turning everything else into fire, including our oil. If we only listened to them. Do not try to fight that which you know is going to beat you along with those who will come to assist you before

you even leave your seats. Do not just open your door and then cry that strong winds are bothering you...think of it. ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

The climate was always something with which to contend, though minimal sacrifices of comfort were often made for socio-cultural purposes. It was elementary to the traditional Ḥedjāzī house that it be naturally ventilated<sup>4</sup>. Temperature controls had to be consistent with the demand for natural lighting and this resulted in a pattern of controlled inlets that saved on the use of lamp-oil and other sources of artificial illumination, hence, reducing the consumption of resources: *"If one was washing from a river, one should not abuse the water."*<sup>5</sup> Dust and heat controls were amongst the concerns of the *mu'allemin* who provided covered openings with various techniques for air-filtering. This led to the location of kitchens and toilets at the back of the house in such a way so as to provide for maximum ventilation, and to protect living areas from smoke and odour.

Climatic considerations were responsible for the particular orientation of houses - to face the direction of the prevailing wind where it was possible. Correct orientation, along with courtyards or projecting bay-windows functioning as wind-catches and collectors were amongst the different measures developed by Ḥedjāzī builders for more efficient climatic control. In Al-Madinah, the courtyard which served to regulate temperature in the house was a necessity rather than a design option. In the most adverse conditions, the need to regulate the internal temperature of the house meant that even the choice of building materials was not really optional, as we see latter in this chapter.

The Ḥedjāzī emphasis on natural climatic control was also manifest in their programming of activities over the time of the day or year. As discussed in chapter three, different zones of the house identified for their thermal properties, and activities assigned accordingly. This resulted in the arrangement of different activities for

---

<sup>4</sup> Because of the lack of the technology at the time, it was obvious that the Ḥedjāzī house would be naturally-ventilated. Despite this fact, it was claimed by some of my interviewees that depending on nature means survival which *"is still preferable in a region such as Ḥedjāz where the availability of water, let alone oil is not an eternal occurrence."* ('Afif Family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> A Prophetic *Ḥadīth*, presented here by *mu'allemin* Ṣāḍāqah Karkāchin (Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

different parts of the day and according to the season as well as the location of such places in the configuration of the house.

#### 10.1.1.3. Client participation

...the owner of the land does not have much to say in the project, the final authority is *al-mu' allem's*. The client gives you his budget and may suggest to you his desired number of rooms and their areas and then depends on God [leave it to fate and leave the site]. (*Mu' allem* Aḥmad Ḥamzah al-Rifī, Al-Madinah, March 25, 1990).

...when it comes to the client's desires and needs, I know exactly what's in his head, what he likes or dislikes, what his brothers would prefer, and even what his sons-in-law might like to have in their rooms. (*Mu' allem* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

This 'constant' was discussed in more details in the past three chapters. However, as a reminder, the client had minimum direct participation throughout the process of the house construction because his needs and requirements were well understood beforehand by the *mu' allem*. The role of the client could not be neglected altogether, but the nature and extent of his participation in the process and the end product was indirect:

...he [the client] and his loved ones must be involved in the story [building process] from the very beginning to the very end. If he and his family want this place [the house] to be like one of their children they must see to its upbringing themselves. The *mu' allem* will give them *al-gālib* [the mould] and they will insert *al-galb* [the heart] if God Almighty so wills. (*Mu' allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

#### 10.1.1.4. Gradual growth

My home is the place I can come back to every night, find my family safe and happy, watch my children grow...Its the place I live in and live for,...I guard it as I guard my reputation and honour,...I want my *madjlis* to be full of people - family, neighbours, friends, relatives, children, every body, every body. *Al-bait ma yiḥiyyā illā b'ahlū wi zouārūh* [A house gains life only from the number of family members

who occupy it and the guests who stay].... My home is almost all that I own in this life. If I built it well, it will treat me well and will enhance the remaining days of my life, just like ones *bizūrah* [lit. seeds = children]. It is very important my son that you build a house of your own. (Al-Makkī, May 18, Jeddah, 1990).

Traditional houses of Ḥedjāz were places where people were born and lived for the rest of their lives. 'Memories' in these houses formed out of local events and were entwined with communal history and tradition. Lifestyles involved the deepest form of 'growing,' a situation of complete and unselfconscious immersion in places<sup>6</sup>. The relationship between a house and its inhabitants was dynamic and adaptable. Modification, maintenance, expansion, and living within the house were the products of a distinct cultural exchange.

Peoples' relationships with their home-areas developed over extended periods of time. In the course of repeated interaction with the same people, surrounding environments, facilities and activities, the features of the home environment become embedded in people's subconscious, that they were no longer fully aware of them. Of course, people knew that their taken-for-granted environments were there, but they only noticed their significance when they were removed from them. As discussed in chapter eight, this was the case with the family member who regained his feelings about home as he came closer to the city-gates, the market, and so on until he reached his door-step. Gradual growth through time was responsible for the strength of such relationships between person, land, the group and home.

We can say that, a newly-completed house became a 'fully mature' one when it embraced a lifestyle that reflected the rhythm of its environment. When the atmosphere of the house was sympathetic with the people and places in and around it, it became a home. To use the traditional metaphor, the *seeds* of the house were spread by the whole community, and were then left to grow and mature under the care

---

<sup>6</sup> Note the metaphoric expressions used by the interviewees throughout the past few chapters, as well as the following ones which always referred to the house as a 'growing' body: *yistawī* (to mature), *rabbīh* (up-bringing), *bizūrah* (seeds = children), *bait shaibah* (the house is an old man), *bait shabāb* (the house is a young man), *yi 'tsh* (to stay-alive), ...etc.

and supervision of the owners<sup>7</sup>. To be modified without ceasing to be traditional, a traditionally designed house had to have been spontaneously growing to emerge, mature and "stay alive."

The concept of gradual growth granted the traditional Ḥedjāzīes a measure of flexibility in the house design. As a private entity, each house in Ḥedjāz displayed a different degree of strictness in terms of restricted accessibility to different rooms by non-family members. The time factor and the gradual growth of the house led occupants within certain *ḥārāt* to relax their rules of inaccessibility in the case of some rooms to admit of functions that - generally - were not allowed within them. For example, old *ḥāra* friends could be admitted to the family *madjlis*, if a public event was taking place on the guest *madjlis* and a private discussion was desired.

Gradual growth over time created an order of values to the varying aspects of the house: its building material, objects within, furniture, and even its inhabitants. As seen earlier, association with these in time developed what the traditional Ḥedjāzīes termed as *al-‘ishra* (association or companionship). Imagine feeling companionship with a cupboard or with a wall simply because one grew up and lived with it all one's life! A range of values was attributed through the familiar use of certain objects in the house - utilitarian, aesthetic, use, sentimental and symbolic - all of which were inherent in interpersonal communication between parents and children, and between members of different social groups.

#### 10.1.1.5. Everyday use

The essence of home authenticity in traditional Ḥedjāz lay in the emergence of meaning through action and use. Commonly and frequently undertaken activities, associated with places, objects and their meanings, all tended to reinforce one another and establish a common 'system,' and a congruous lifestyle. Such places and objects were vital for the house to perform its functions properly, and if a Home was to emerge.

---

<sup>7</sup> Note the quotation of the *mu'alleṃ* above: "The *mu'alleṃ* will gave them *al-gālib* [the mould] and they will complete *al-galb* [the heart]." (*Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

The time factor allowed various elements of the house to assume further layers of values in a reciprocal process whereby each element complemented and completed the other as vital components in the home organism<sup>8</sup>. If authentic places and things were born from genuine dwelling practices in everyday life, then the manifestation of this authenticity in the house is most likely to be in its overall configuration.

We [old Ḥedjāzīes] say "if you cannot afford it, you do not need it, and if you do not need it you do not have to look for it." Open the door to your own desires, your wife's or children's whims and you will have opened a door that only God Almighty can close for you. There is no end to the things that could make you comfortable, but a limited number of things can sustain you with the least trouble and effort on your part. If you can stop using your arm for a year, you most likely will not need it. If you can live without a car for a year, chances are you do not need one... The child who wets your lap, put him on the floor or give him to his mother...Passengers on a ship will not carry goats unless they are going to eat them, and in a sinking ship, what they do not need they will leave to the sea to save their own lives. ('Afīf family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

These comments were made in the context of a comparison between traditional and modern Ḥedjāz. It is a criticism of luxury for the sake of luxury, of houses with multiple rooms that are infrequently used, of elements of the house that are attached to it as "goats that are not going to be consumed," and are of little functional value. This statements by an elderly member of the 'Afīf family expressed the opinion that objects and even rooms in the house are meaningful only in terms of usefulness to members of the household and that it is better to discard what is no longer useful. He remarked that old furniture or clothing had a useful sentimental value until the house became full of them. Therefore, a point is arrived at where sentiment must yield to practicality (he gives the analogy of the lap-watering child).

As discussed in chapter twelve, today's use of replica *rawāshīn* (bay-windows), for example, would never lend authenticity to the houses to which they are attached.

---

<sup>8</sup> According to Kimberly, "Authenticity is a property of connectedness between the perceived world and the believed world. It connects us spatially with the places in which we dwell and temporally with the past and the future..its a way of being-in-the-world through everyday use." See Dovey, Kimberly. "The Quest for Authenticity and the Replication of Environmental Meaning." *Dwelling, Place and Environment*. Ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. 47.



For, traditionally, these bay-windows served as boundary control devices for the regulation of temperature, ventilation, light and sound, to provide views, and to satisfy a host of other domestic functions. In their original context, these *rawāshin* were integrated with the everyday life of the places they enclosed. The authenticity of time-old traditions is lost when the form loses its integration with everyday life of the place. Although I believe that the meaning of an object or a place might lie dormant until circumstances combine to bring that object or space into use or provide it with meaning, I still think that the example used by the ‘Afīf family member - the unused arm - is relevant.

Everyday use in the Ḥedjāzī house established the best employment of space. Traditionally, almost every inch of the house was used throughout the day (Fig.10.2.). Each room was characterised by the way people did things in it which were functionally vital in the course of everyday life. In most cases, different places in the house and neighbourhood were also associated with social relationships, and

evoked memories of childhood relationships, family history, cultural and religious affiliations. Respondents in my interviews referred to gender and age group-linked activities associated with each room, such as cooking and meeting by women (*murakkab* = kitchen), business dealings by men (*maq‘ad*, *madjlis* = reception-areas), playing by children (*bāb al-zugāg* = at the gate or lane), afternoon-meetings by the elderly (*maṣṭabah*, *merkāz* = outdoor sitting-platforms) and so on, thereby confirming the role of the Home as the locus of social bonds, rules, and norms.

### 10.1.1.6. Meaning

The Ḥedjāzī family invested the house, the neighbourhood and different places in the city with meaning and significance, and acted in ways that reflected their bonds

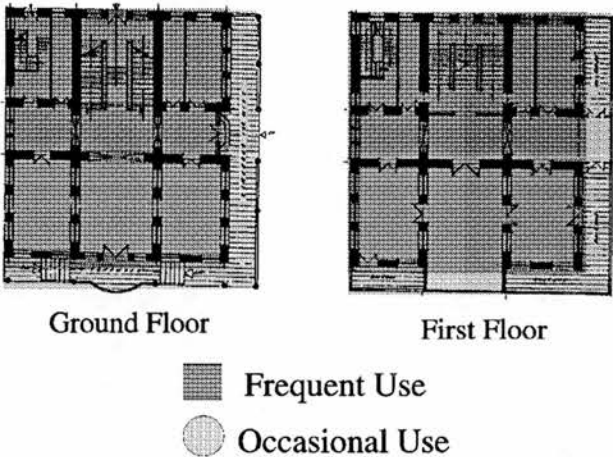


Fig. 10.2. Almost every inch of the house was used throughout the day.

with these places. While the primary purpose of the built-environment in traditional Ḥedjāz was not communication, people read volumes from every space, building and situation, and these meanings were well-known to everyone. The reciprocal process of transformation and incorporation between the individual and his home-range that is discussed in chapter eight, involved in the first place investing it with meaning, caring for it and identifying himself with it.

Meaningful environments were the outcome of the fusion of understanding and feeling. The spiritual Ḥedjāzī home that we refer to in chapters seven and eight, emerged from the physical house and vice-versa. The fact that houses developed under the 'restrictions' of the culturally-accepted matrices, indicates that the meanings of the built environment were shared and widely accepted, resulting in a holistic environment which communicated clearly to its inhabitants. These meanings were "*as if they were written on the walls of the room with large letters.*"<sup>9</sup> The existence of both implicit and explicit rules for the use of space, transformed the house from a space into an effective place where personal and social values and meanings converged and interacted.

The residents of the house and the house itself formed a unity of meaning in the eyes of the community. As mentioned in chapter eight, in the case of the elderly member of the 'Afīf family visiting his new friend's house for the first time'<sup>10</sup>, the interior of the house and its occupants could be subsumed by the message of the structure. The extent to which this applied would, of course, develop on the degree of familiarity the visitor otherwise had with the family, and the degree of confusion in the architectural language.

The spatial organization of the Ḥedjāzī house expressed meanings and had symbolic communicative properties. These meanings coincided with the spatial organization of the house and the neighbourhood. Furthermore, different spatial arrangements communicated different meanings that were indicators of social position and identity and were indications of expected behaviour as we see later in this chapter.

---

<sup>9</sup> 'Afīf family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> As understood from the interviewee's narrations: when he felt 'rejected' by the 'dim faces' of the house he was visiting, his attention was drawn to the physical entity of the house and its structure. See chapter eight for more details.

### 10.1.1.7. Privacy

First: *kollanā amānāt ba'aḍ*: We are all the custodians, the trustees, and the guardians of each other. Second: Your faith will not be complete until you wish for your brother what you wish for yourself. [A gentlemen's agreement means that] we - the neighbours - trust each other beyond any rules or regulations, therefore if your window was to touch mine, I shall rest assured that you will not think of looking at my *ḥarem*, let alone attempting to invade the privacy of my house. Because I know that you would not like me to look through your windows and you want to be fair with me. Although Islam laid down penalties as in the Prophet's *Ḥadīth* that he who looks into a house without permission of its owner will have his eyes punctured, it was referring to periods full of sick [perverted] people, when people start doubting each other's honesty and hearts became full of misunderstanding and suspicion. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah 'olaimī*, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

The traditional Ḥedjāzī house, neighbourhood and city were based upon an intricate balance between the privacy of the individual's life and his communal role in society. This applied in various ways to various combinations of individuals and groups and was recognized and respected. At the house level, privacy determined domestic organization and the corresponding spatial arrangements. It governed the plan of the house in that it had to be ensured among members of the household, in the separation between public and private functions within, and in protecting the house itself.

...you cannot go around telling people "This is a senior member of our community, by God address him properly, didn't you notice that he was sitting *fī waṣṭ al maḥil* [in the centre of the gathering]." Or "Please turn your eyes because we are approaching a private area." Or "By God cough or make a sound so that the women of the house will know that you are coming or you are sitting in the room." What is worse than this, something that happened to me some days ago: I had to tell some people not to follow me until I looked for a *ṭarīg* [notified the women of the presence of a guest] as they were dashing inside the house without my permission. God is Great! If you told an old Ḥedjāzī to do any of these things - if he happened to be ignorant of them - it would be the last you would see of him in your entire life. Let people learn and understand their *'ādāt* by themselves, or may they suffer the worst of consequences for they are not children or *adjānib* [foreigners]. (Al-Makkī family, Makkah, May 19, 1990).

This stress on privacy is - at its core - a religious requirement; functions and places in traditional Ḥedjāz were divided on the basis of gender, and visual barriers had to be created. However, the desire to control unwanted interaction with others resulted in a set of architectural and spatial imperatives that were met with a number of solutions. The aim was to segregate public from private space so that the men could circulate without interfering with the movement and activities of women.

As discussed in chapter seven, many mechanisms for achieving privacy operated, most of which were not physical at all. The observance of rules dictated by normal good manners, an understanding of what or whom to avoid and when, and a recognised social hierarchy substituted for physical barriers by defining correct behaviour so that unwanted intercourse was virtually always avoided. Custom was relied upon to inform the need to avoid certain places at certain times (e.g., the principle of *ṭarīq* or "give way"). A combination of characteristics contributed privacy inside the Ḥedjāzī house. For example, the understanding of who could penetrate where and how far was customary and normative, but also supported by appropriate physical and visual barriers.

...In my day,...when someone knocked my door at 2 o'clock [siesta time], I had no doubt that it was an emergency and I was the only one who could help. Today when someone knocks on my door whenever he feels like it, the emergency is in my house for I have to immediately rearrange my time, my *madjlis* and my activities to receive him...(Mu'alleḥ Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 9, 1990).

#### 10.1.1.8. Common cultural language

[The customs and traditions are clear and open], observe them and you will find how easily love, dignity and honour can be won...he who has a head with two eyes must follow the ways of the people. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

Of course we knew the habits of each other, but we also knew that homes were secrets [secret places] and each family stood on its own before God. Some people are conservative and religious, some are liberal and only fellow travellers. All this could be seen in the *madjlis* as if it were written *bil-bonṭ al-'arīḍ* [with large letters on the walls]. ('Afīf family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

Culture constraints like those discussed above belonged to a system of rules, or as what is referred to in the previous chapter as the 'culturally-accepted matrix.' These were taken into consideration in the priority assigned to the various house elements and sometimes architectural devices could be dispensed with when custom could achieve similar ends. For example a bent entrance or an antechamber (*ṣuffah*) could be used to prevent direct visibility into the house. But if it were the custom to lower one's gaze once at the door of the house, then all that would be needed would be to evacuate the area where the guest was received. That is, the social means of control would be sufficient to alter the design priorities of the house.

These social means could also be considered as a 'common language' which is mainly a silent one. What the *mu'allemin* referred to as '*adātānā wa taqālīdanā*<sup>11</sup> (norms and habits) or *al-ʿurf* (the cultural convention, custom or protocol) were a set of beliefs and values which led to a common world view and the way Ḥedjāzī cities was shaped. These '*adāt* and '*rāff*' represent a common cultural language - or a semiotic spatial language - which gave warnings and helped persons to perform their required duties while still observing avoidance norms (e.g., mechanisms for privacy maintenance). Unlike spoken language<sup>12</sup>, the common cultural language transmits meaning through a form of collective intuition. Therefore, social understanding described what was appropriate and expected in certain settings at particular times, and gave meaning to each setting, group of people and their behaviour. Social norms and roles suggested how homes should be used, the times and places for entering, entertaining, eating, as well as a host of other active and symbolic practices. These were reflected in the configurations of Ḥedjāzī homes as well as in the location and use of objects and furniture.

As discussed in chapter eight, the Ḥedjāzī house changed centres of importance from one mode to another in accordance with the arrangement of the daily routine. The visitor's knowledge of convention would inform him when, for example, a private

---

<sup>11</sup> '*Adāt* or normative customs in traditional Ḥedjāz meant those regional customs and practices which had the force of social 'law.'

<sup>12</sup> Hall defined the spoken language as a system of organizing information and for releasing thoughts and responses from one individual to the other. See Hall, Edward T. *Beyond Culture*. New York: Anchor Books, 1976. 57.



place changed into a semi-public one (once the principle of *ṭarīq* was invoked)<sup>13</sup>. The common cultural language would moreover inform him of the protocols to be observed: where would behaviour, normally taken for granted, be unacceptable or even prohibited (e.g., laying down in the presence of a distinguished guest), when would the simple consumption of beverages become an insult to a family member (i.e., drinking coffee in the presence of a senior family member), and so on.

We also see in chapter three that activities of the house must be seen in time as well as in space, and that the organization of activities into diurnal, nocturnal and seasonal time-frames substituted for the organization of space through physical means. The understanding of the prevailing cultural conventions of time-organization as we see above, assured residents that there would be no interference with, for example, the time for meeting visitors in the *madjlis*. A special *madjlis* for reception could be replaced by allocating and specifying the time for this activity elsewhere.

The existence of common cultural language was responsible for the homogeneity of the Ḥedjāzī neighbourhood. It made life more predictable, it simplified understanding and it reduced the need to process information on an individual bases. It allowed people to behave more naturally within a clearly comprehensible domestic environment. It allowed meaning to be taken for granted, leading to a much clearer and more effective non-verbal communication<sup>14</sup>. The traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb "*a stranger must be polite*," was more or less a warning to those who do not 'speak' or comprehend the common cultural language as the al-Makkī family member suggested above<sup>15</sup>. The retention of common cultural codes and symbols may often obviate the need to exercise or develop other ways of conveying non-verbal messages, such as physical violence. It reduced conflict, the need for territorial demarcation and so on.

---

<sup>13</sup> In smaller houses for example, the segregation of genders depended solely on such codes.

<sup>14</sup> Even local disputes with neighbours or strangers like the problem of *ḥārāwiyyah* (extreme pride of one's *ḥāra* leading to fanaticism and exaggerated protectiveness), which always escalated in stages, started with non-verbal cues, body language and gestures, then proceeded to verbal hints, verbal confrontations, and finally physical action as a last resort. This was a typical pattern whether within a household, or in a situation of a neighbours quarrel over a boundary. In all cases, these stages were well known to everyone. According to *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, children were brought up to observe these rules as accepted normal behaviour.

<sup>15</sup> "*Let people learn and understand their 'adāt by themselves, or may they suffer the worst of consequences for they are not children or adjānib [foreigners].*" (Al-Makkī family, Makkah, May 19, 1990).



#### 10.1.1.9. Group solidarity

...every house in the town was mine, we were all one big family. If someone was happy, we were all happy, and if someone was sad, we were all sad, and in both cases we would be with him...If someone wanted to build a house and he did not own a piece of land to build on, one of his relatives or friends would lend him the land to build on for a nominal fee...Hearts were righteous, full of nobility, gallantry, love, bravery, magnanimity, manhood and fellowship: *Kānat all-Widjīh fīhā moiyyah* [lit. faces were full of water = bashful, self-conscious, timid, full of dignity, consideration and courtesy to others]... (*Mu'allef* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

I want my *majlis* to be full of people, family, friends, relatives, children, every body, every body. *Al-bait ma yiḥiyyā illā b'ahlū wi zouārūh* [A house gains life only from the number of family members who occupy it and the guests who stay]... (Al-Makkī, May 18, Jeddah, 1990).

Do not enter a paradise that does not have people. The pleasure of food is lost if the meal is not shared.<sup>16</sup>

The Ḥedjāzī *ḥāra* performed important functions in areas of social control, socialization and mutual help for its residents (Fig.10.3.). It established, maintained and encouraged a social solidarity in a closely-knit and homogeneous community. Each of these *ḥārāt* retained a special character. The solidarity of some of these *ḥārāt* was based on common craft or occupation (e.g., *Ḥārat al-Baḥar* for fishermen in Jeddah) or strong family ties between the residents. The hierarchical order of

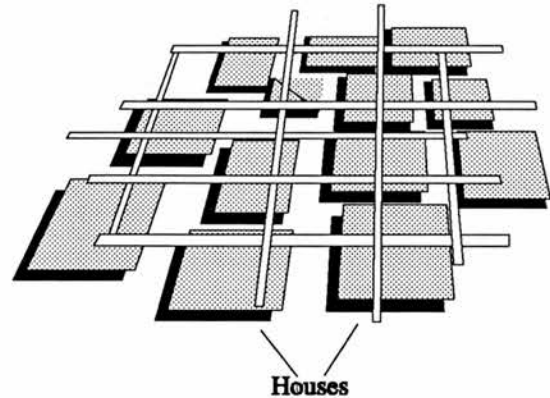


Fig. 10.3. Houses in a Ḥedjāzī *ḥāra* were socially connected.

group solidarity was represented in every house in the neighbourhood through the multi-generation extended family. As discussed in chapter one, the basic unit of the

<sup>16</sup> The first part is a traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb modified by an elderly member of al-Makkī family. (Written interview, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

Ḥedjāzī community was the extended family where group solidarity and social cohesion originated. The influence of this social structure was of great importance for the very livelihood of any given community.

The nature of the traditional Ḥedjāzī family structure, where the eldest of the family, representing the supreme authority inside the house, followed by his wife and the elder son - as discussed in chapters one and eight - meant that the physical and social needs of those within it were fulfilled in the sense of obligation. The loyalty and sense of belonging that resulted from such a structure enhanced the quality of life inside the house (i.e., the internal world) and were further extended to the rest of the neighbourhood (i.e., the external world). The family represented the inner world of the individual, without which the notion of 'home' would not emerge to its full extent.

Group solidarity produced a coherence in the traditional Ḥedjāzī domestic architecture. We see in chapters six and nine that houses were not created solely by the user or the *mu'allem* but were rather the product of a system of shared values. House designs were based on the use of a culturally-accepted model with some variations at different periods. Group solidarity was the gauge by which these variations were measured against the 'cultural limit' of acceptability. It also eased the process of communication between individuals and their environment, since it was linked with notions of common cultural language and privacy maintenance among other things.

Each *ḥāra*, being a self-sufficient neighbourhood was able to live almost independently when necessary through a delicate balance between self-sufficiency and isolation. The services provided in each neighbourhood (e.g., mosque, market, coffee-house) maintained the solidarity of residents and their concern to protect and care for it, creating a municipal structure that could take care of itself.

We never caught anyone throwing rubbish into the street because he knew that he was responsible for the cleanliness of his street and spraying it with water in the afternoon. A clean street is a sign of clean houses and clean people... (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī*, Jeddah, march 29, 1990).

The solidarity of the *ḥāra* was also reinforced by the important social and administrative responsibilities which devolved upon it. Administrative responsibilities

fell to the elderly or the selected *'omdah* and were extended to cover the functions of the local authorities (i.e., police). But, as far as the houses were concerned, the reciprocal duties and obligations between members of the community were governed by the fundamental Islamic principle of *"neither harm nor reciprocating harm."*<sup>17</sup> The communal property right ensured the continued provision of common space. Territories and boundaries were therefore influenced by solidarity with, and care for others rather characterised by endless disputes over property lines, conflicting visual accesses and so on. The difference between the outside and the inside of the house was reduced to the mere materiality of different spaces. This community spirit reduced the dependency on mechanisms of defence and privacy for protection, as well as providing a common purpose and a shared desire to co-exist on the best terms possible. Reciprocal duties and obligations represented by the notion of *"we are all the guardians of each other"*<sup>18</sup> dictated that each member of the community had to be responsible for the wellbeing of his fellow members. At the street level, the security of women, children and the elderly was maintained through this closely-knit social structure.

There is no evidence to suggest that there existed any fundamental division between separation of socio-economic classes throughout Ḥedjāz. *Ḥārāt* were communities of both rich and poor, élite and common-folk. Homogeneity and agreement on goals based on shared values and world views led to a high level of cooperation among members of the community, with the involvement and participation of everyone.

#### 10.1.1.10. Self-representation

...the original and genuine Ḥedjāzī family did not need to go through all this [showing-off], everybody knew them very well and we all knew how much they were worth from the size of their warehouses, shops and their merchandise at sea. They also were very modest about showing any difference between their houses [rich families'] and ours, although some of the younger ones did, but no one I knew was offended. Between us, the ordinary Ḥedjāzīs, if one of us started spending large sums of money on the façades of his house, people

---

<sup>17</sup> An authentic Prophetic *Ḥadīth*.

<sup>18</sup> *Mu'alletm Şaḍāqah 'Olaimī*, Jeddah, March 29, 1990.

became offended, and he was condemned for trying to be different. It was as if belonging to our class did not suit him, and he was immediately shunned by the *ḥāra*. Real men were judged by their accomplishments on behalf of others, their morality and ability to serve their community, not by how much wealth their trade brought them. You could have been the richest Ḥedjāzī and happened to be an arrogant type of man, isolating yourself from the community by showing your unwillingness to help others. As such, people would know nothing about you, but that you were very rich and that all your money and your beautiful *sarāiyāh* would not capture the heart of the youngest of our children. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

All means of social identification were emphasized in traditional Ḥedjāz, but in appropriate context and without ostentation. The 'self' in traditional Ḥedjāz was presented through other means than physical ones. In view of the homogeneity between apparent members in the neighbourhood, the need for personalization did not result in chaotic architectural products for the sake of self-advertisement. Instead, this was satisfied within a coherent process which produced houses with a distinct and comprehensible character enabling members of the community to communicate their identity in a subtle and discreet manner. The external façade of the house was hardly ever targeted either by clients or their *mu'allemin* for personalization. However, the interior of the house was the main focus of self-representation in terms of lifestyle or by symbols of social status and identity.

Objects were used as a medium of identification rather than for vulgar display. The house represented the owner rather than 'performed' on his behalf. The traditional house did not have to 'dress-up' to the standards of the social élite, simply because the houses of those on the 'top' were not dramatically different from those of any other in a given *ḥāra*.

#### 10.1.1.11. Ownership

If you do not live in your own property, you are not living at all. ('Afif family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

Pride is felt by those who have property and money, especially property since it is visible. As a matter of fact, men are measured by their accomplishments and good deeds, but money dresses men with

pride and status while property clothes them with beauty. (Şāliḥ Bā'ishin).<sup>19</sup>

These statements affirm that, to the traditional Ḥedjāzīs, house-ownership is a basic ingredient of home. House-ownership was so important that it was almost associated with life itself. There were many cases of people who rented accommodation for a life-time, yet did not get the full satisfaction of 'home,' as enjoyed presumably by others. This may in part be due to the societal value placed on real-estate ownership (which was not applied to buildings other than houses). House ownership is an issue that was related to territoriality in the traditional Ḥedjāzī neighbourhood. Ownership was a means of confirming one's place in the 'world,' that is, in the neighbourhood. It was a pre-condition to the success of the process of incorporation and home-making.

#### 10.1.1.12. Hierarchical order of age

...true that real-estate and money were valued in Ḥedjāz, but men were not judged according to their wealth. We respected an old man whether he was a *ghafīr wallā wazīr* (a night guard or a minister). Younger brothers addressed their older brothers as *sīdī*, just as the older brother who would address his older brother or a senior member of the family, in turn, as *yā sīdī* (my master or grandfather). Call someone who is older than you "*yā 'ammī*" (my parental uncle) even if you just met him for the first time. *kull wāḥid yi 'rif gadrū wu magāmū* (each one knew his social duties and obligations as well as his social status) (*Mu'allem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

Every one listened and obeyed me from the youngest to the eldest of my sons and their wives. ('Afīf family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

No child, a man of your age, or even one of the rich merchants of Jeddah, would pass by my '*atabah* [threshold or outdoor sitting-platform] without greeting me and may be humbly asking me for advice. No one would swear before an older person, not a man to his own brother or even to his wife as long as one [a senior member] was

---

<sup>19</sup> Bā 'ishin, M. Şāliḥ. "Personal Autobiography." Cited in *Mawso'at Tārīkh Madīnat Jeddah*, [The Encyclopedia of the History of the City of Jeddah]. 'abduḥ Quddūs al-Anṣārī. Cairo: Dār Miṣr Lilḥibā'ah, 1982 AD/1402 AH, 2 vols., 1: 279.

present. Not because you would deprive them of their daily bread or prevent them from drinking water or breathing air. It was simply the spirit of the past, people gave you respect because you were senior, you knew more about life and respect you because you were worth learning from. I am not telling you a story about *Al-shāfir Ḥasan* [a folk-tale about a famous Arabian personality], I am talking about daily routines that we [elderly folks] never thought about until these days when we sit and remember the past. If *'amak fūlān* [*lit.* Your uncle= an elderly] asked you to do this or that, you would not question him, even if you were not related to him, as long as you lived with him in the same *ḥāra*....(*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 14, 1990).

The hierarchy of authority and obligation in Ḥedjāz - from the family to the governor of the State - helped in maintaining the social stability of communities. The unquestioned nature of this hierarchical system, though not a political one, helped individuals to attain their position in any given community. Status as a senior member of society was much more influential in resolving disputes and in decision making than any financial power or political position. Younger brothers reported to older ones, neighbours reported to their *'omdah* (the elderly head of the neighbourhood), the apprentice reported to his *mu'allem* and so forth.

We see in chapter eleven how group membership, which was a function of this hierarchical social order, traditionally helped individuals to find their place within the community and identify and be identified accordingly. This form of social organization clarified traditional Ḥedjāzī society by reducing the number of categories under which an individual could be socially classified (he was a member of a particular family and a resident of a particular *ḥāra*). Occupation further identified individuals within the hierarchy which did not need enforcement.

#### 10.1.1.13. Inside-outside relationships

The streets and lanes of the traditional neighbourhood - as discussed in chapter three - were natural extensions of the house, hence, the family. Families used areas of the house and around it to interact with each other as well as with the rest of the community. Part of the daily life of the family spilled out into the surrounding areas of the house which was a very important feature. Outdoor recreation for most age groups took place on the street, and so did special events like marriages and other



communal festivities (as we see earlier, this was reflected in the fact that *ḥāra* residents cleaned and maintained areas around the house, even though they were not legally responsible for their upkeep). We also see in chapter eight how the notion of home encompassed the neighbourhood as the first concentric-zone around the house. (Fig 10.4.).

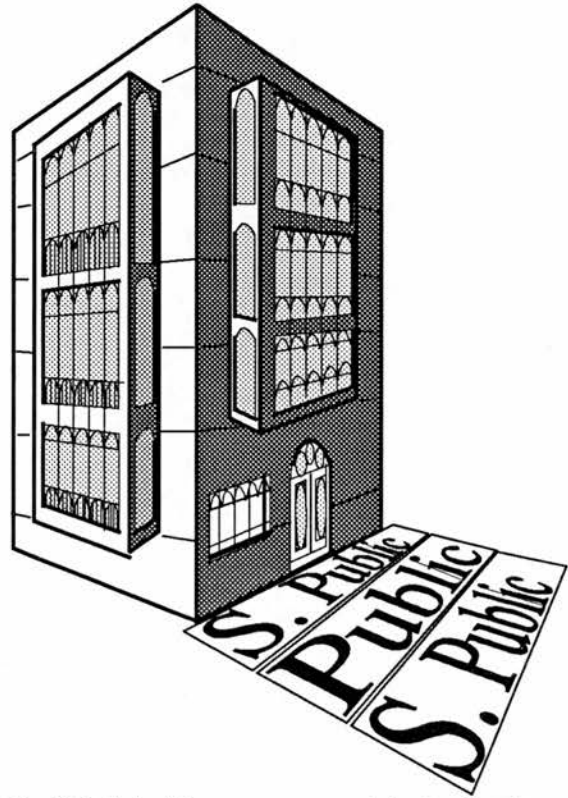


Fig. 10.4. Each of these zones represented a territory to different genders and age-groups.

The concern of the traditional Ḥedjāzīs to define the demarcation between their own domestic territory and its outside surroundings was not maintained to advertise a physical distinction for its own sake, nor to discourage physical contact, which would have been necessary. It was to protect their visual privacy. Therefore, it was a socio-cultural device, where line-of-sight control rather than physical distance was important. In fact, spatial distance between houses or between rooms in a house was rarely, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the solely relied upon mechanisms for maintaining social distance. Of course physical barriers were employed to emphasis social boundaries in the absence of a comprehensive common cultural language<sup>20</sup>.

#### 10.1.1.14. Neighbourhood configuration

....*kull ḥodjrah wulhā odjrah, wukull bait wulū makanū wu makānatū*  
[lit. there is a price for every room [or house], and a specific place and value for each house]...the houses in any Ḥedjāzī *ḥāra* may appear to

<sup>20</sup> An interesting example of this was narrated by a member of the 'Afīf family from the city of Jeddah: in *ḥārat al-shām* (the neighbourhood of the Levant), most of the large merchant houses were rented by foreign missions (e.g., American, British) who were, naturally, not fully aware of the cultural language of the city. The result was that all the houses of this neighbourhood - including their foreign and native occupants - displayed different signs of social identity and physical barriers than the rest of the town.

you as if they were poured down from the sky and each one fell in whichever space it desired, but everything we built was in accordance with a meaningful pattern. We considered the *ḥurumāt* [privacy] of each other's houses and lanes, the direction from which the life-giving breeze blows, the suitable grounds [soil], and a lot of other things that only someone of my age could understand. We would not just build houses attached to each other and prevent one another from enjoying the face of God [*slang.* light, views and breeze] (*Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimy, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

The prerequisite considerations included, therefore, patterns of built form, open space, land use, relations between buildings, commercial settings and so forth. While the above statement might imply that traditional Ḥedjāzī *ḥārāt* were 'pre-planned,' the considerations mentioned by the *mu'allem* were only observed within the framework of expected growth of the *ḥāra*. Although these *ḥārāt* were not planned in the modern sense of the term, every new building found its place in the urban fabric, and was not haphazardly conceived by its owners and builders. Topography and available space determined to some extent the location of prospective houses, but evidence from the interviews suggests that an overall image of the *ḥāra* was discussed among members of each community, particularly its elderly, the '*omdah* (head of the neighbourhood) and *sheikh al-bannā'* (head of the building guild). Furthermore, the traditional Ḥedjāzī *mu'allemīn* did not build houses as self-sufficient units in terms of space, but considered the layout of the entire neighbourhood. Like the pieces of a mosaic, houses fitted into a gradually forming picture where space turned into streets, *brāḥāt* (open-spaces), *aswāq* (markets), *aziqqah* (lanes) and so on.

Mainly two traditional 'planning' concepts governed the layout of the Ḥedjāzī *ḥāra*; these were appropriate orientation of the whole neighbourhood, and its internal spatial organization. Both served a multitude of physical and socio-cultural functions. For example, the choice of location of *ḥārāt* in the urban settlements was guided by the concern to protect and to benefit from the natural environment, and to create socially-congenial and bio-climatically comfortable living conditions on the one hand, and to protect the visual privacy of houses on the other. Therefore, site selection was a major concern. For a city located at the seaside like Jeddah, for example, houses naturally faced the sea, taking full advantage of the sea breeze. The city's back was turned against the hot winds of the desert. And further protection against them was achieved by grouping the houses together in a dense pattern.

Organization of houses in the closely-knit neighbourhood arrangement typical of Ḥedjāz reflected and fostered different forms of communication, temporal flows of interaction and interpersonal relationships between neighbours. It contrasts with some of the inevitable impersonality which was the outcome of the rapid growth of the early 1900s as described by *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin: "...our *ḥārāt* treat us today as the solid buildings within them, new comers [new Ḥedjāzī residents] care nothing about us [old residents] and we return the sentiment."<sup>21</sup>

The arrangement of houses in the *ḥāra* aided privacy - in spite of their proximity - and discouraged outsiders from exploring or wandering around. This maximized privacy while minimizing the physical mechanisms needed to enforce it like high walls and bent-entrances. The organization of buildings in the neighbourhood also defined activity by placing buildings in particular places and settings, each with known or expected associations (e.g., "houses in proximity to the mosque were to serve the mosque in some way or another."<sup>22</sup>) They conveyed meanings in social and cultural terms (e.g., "houses with open doors are generous houses,")<sup>23</sup> and they provided frameworks and settings that indicated appropriate action and behaviour in particular events and in particular locations (e.g., houses in a *baraḥa* or cul-de-sac form a private-zone that require permission to enter).

#### 10.1.1.15. Spatial organization of the house<sup>24</sup>

While the layout of houses varied slightly between the towns of Makkah and Jeddah, and more notably between these and Al-Madinah, as seen in chapter three, the spatial configuration of the Ḥedjāzī house throughout the region revealed the same aspects of the corresponding lifestyles. This was independent of shape and more fundamentally expressive of the characteristics of the occupants than form or building material:

---

<sup>21</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990.

<sup>22</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 10, 1990.

<sup>23</sup> *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990.

<sup>24</sup> Although it is represented here as a fixed (physically-indispensable) feature of the house, space organization expressed meanings through the pattern of semi-fixed and non-fixed features (objects, furniture, and other human behaviour) as discussed here.

...you can say that we were one big family in Ḥedjāz...of course each house had its own peculiarities, but in general all houses were Ḥedjāzī *fī algalb wa al-gālib* [*lit.* in heart and mould = houses were similar in their interiors, adherence to conventions, space organization, and in their external forms]. ('Afīf Family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

Typical throughout all income levels in traditional Ḥedjāz was the vertical and horizontal growth of the house to accommodate new members as families increased. The vertical expansion of the house gave the layout its typical Ḥedjāzī configuration. However, the location of activities with respect to the inhabitants' gender, age, and domestic status (as well as the use of different spaces as determined by seasonal variations and daytime activities), was a consistent feature regardless of orientation or direction of growth.

As discussed in chapter seven, the distinction between private, semi-public and public spaces in the Ḥedjāzī house was so consistent throughout Ḥedjāzī cities that certain cultural conventions were established (e.g., the deeper and higher inside the house, the more private it becomes). This, in turn, indicated appropriate behaviour based on a common understanding of the layout of the house: ground floors for men whether members of the family, relatives or guests; upper floors for the women of

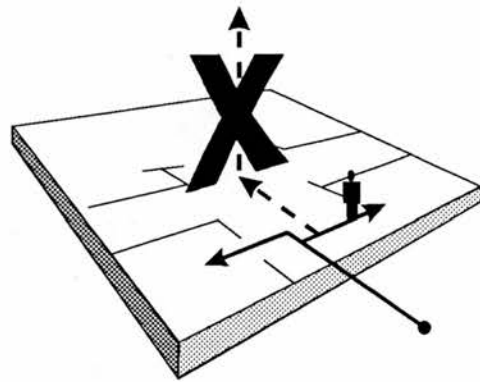


Fig. 10.5. The deeper and higher inside the house, the more private it becomes.

the family as well as guests. Houses also featured similar zones of penetration for people like visitors, kin-groups and women from the outside. Guest rooms and visitors' movement were restricted to assigned zones of the house to preserve privacy. Furthermore, vertical communication (staircases) between rooms was segregated and visually protected, as discussed in chapters six and seven. This facilitated family and guest movement inside the house with minimum disturbance to its routine.

Within these assigned-zones, interior spaces were made functionally non-specific, so that rooms could be used interchangeably for a number of domestic purposes. Rooms in the traditional Ḥedjāzī house were not considered as merely a

space-formation of four plain walls, but as places with living characteristics that included all the features that made the house a proper place for human existence.

There was also an additional number of constants that the traditional house could never have been imagined without. These included built-in furniture (non-movable furniture of the house like the front door *maṣṭabah*, *merkāz* and *jalsat al-rowshān* (sitting-platforms). As permanent fixtures, these structures gained cumulative layers of meaning from the time they were built and 'aged' with the house. There was also the prerequisite of having two entrances to the house, one for each gender. This requirement depended on the size of the house as far as the adjacent street width was concerned. The availability of more than one elevation exposed to the street also determined the possibility of having a secondary entrance. Finally, terraces were necessary in houses where outdoor spaces or courtyards were not available in order to provide an open space for family gathering and entertainment.

#### 10.1.1.16. Multi-purpose rooms

We see in chapters seven and eight that the traditional Ḥedjāzī house 'changed faces' from one hour of the day to another and, with it, the role played by each place in catering for different activities of the household. The house could then be described as a 'multi-house' in which each room would have a certain function, and include or exclude certain groups, depending on the time of day. This was a constant factor stemming from the traditional perception of the house as a human body: composed of many parts yet still being one *jerm* (body) as *mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin* put it: "*The hand would wash, eat, hit, lift, write, plead...etc, and so would other parts of your body. Why then should we confine these parts to a single function!*" For instance, the *madjlis* was used as a reception and sitting room during the day and as a bedroom at night. We also see in chapter three that the *khazānah* (storage-room) was used not only to store goods but for cooking and food preparation as well. It was possible to engage in the same activity in a number of different places or rooms, except that some settings were more appropriate than others for certain uses and certain meanings<sup>25</sup>.

---

<sup>25</sup> For example animals could be slaughtered on the roof, at the front gate, or in the kitchen. But this same activity had different meanings depending on the place with which it was associated, some positive, others not. (e.g., slaughtering at the front door = show off = negative).



Diurnal, nocturnal and seasonal patterns of space-use granted the house great flexibility and the possibility of accommodating more families per house, thus reducing the demands on building. The potential of space for multi-purpose use and the non-specialization of rooms were almost essential in traditional Ḥedjāzī houses when space for building was relatively limited, and a large number of families had to be accommodated. Each new situation brought new needs, wants, ideas, likes and dislikes. The notion of multi-purpose rooms is related to the concept of 'gradual growth' discussed above, as it allowed for various arrangements to be tried and different moods to be created within the house. A large part of the house remained neutral for some time before a new function was allowed to fill in, hence the house was never locked into limited themes, moods or activities. The house did not only accommodate the family at a particular time, but also for times to come.

Within this scheme of flexibility, some rooms in the house gained particular significance through their consistent use at certain times of the day. An example of such would be the special room where members of the immediate family (as opposed to the extended family) met. While many functions were carried in this room (e.g., reception of relatives and female guests), the family room was almost always assigned a special name because of the frequency and duration of its use. This room was described as "*the caring heart of the house*"<sup>26</sup> by one of the 'Afif family members, who spent the last 63 years of his life in a traditional house in the city of Makkah.

#### 10.1.1.17. Building materials

The main criteria for selecting certain building materials for the production of the traditional house were their availability in different localities, their durability and their suitability for the intended use. For instance, it was not a pre-condition for a house to be built using *ḥadjar manqabī* in Jeddah, and the owner could bring mountain-stone from Makkah. However, building a house in Jeddah with stones from Makkah would have been culturally undesirable because of the associative meaning of using materials from different localities<sup>27</sup>. Accordingly, it was not the materials

---

<sup>26</sup> 'Afif Family. Jeddah, March 12, 1990. Also see chapters seven and eight.

<sup>27</sup> Using building materials from different localities without having a good reason for doing so (e.g., price of material) would suggest that the house owner is trying to be different from his group.



themselves which were constant, but the meanings generated by their use through the course of time that determined their cultural values.

*"kull mīn wu samnū fī dagīgū [lit. Each town had its cooking butter in its flour = each town used its own resources]."*<sup>28</sup> Building with local material was a priority because it emphasized a number of meanings such as harmony with the natural environment, and the maintenance of equality and conformity between members of the society<sup>29</sup>. Once the type of building material available was established, the second pre-condition was to determine its suitability for the intended use (whether for load-bearing properties, heat-transfer delay, associative meanings,...etc.).

Durability was not just a 'beautiful' and desirable property of a building material, it was a priority. Building materials could measure up to the desired quality in other regards, but would still be unsuitable if it was not durable<sup>30</sup>. As we see in chapter seven, the use of marble blocks on thresholds, or the use of teak wood for *mashrabiyyāt* - despite their association with wealth and high social status - satisfied the major concern of both *mu'allemin* and clients (rich and otherwise) for durability of materials.

The other main point concerning the use of certain building materials was the *"feelings generated by the earth around one."*<sup>31</sup> The fact that they were local materials had a special meaning to the Ḥedjāzīs, engendered by this in itself. Being in context, local material gave a sense of identity to people. *"Stones and baṭḥāh from*

---

<sup>28</sup> *Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990. Modified from a traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb.

<sup>29</sup> Although importing wood from around the Muslim world for the construction of *rawāshīn* and doors was acceptable, having the whole house built with a non-contextual specific material was not recommended. Inside the house, however, foreign-made pieces of furniture were, on the contrary, desirable to have because of their fine craftsmanship. (*Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> In some cases the durability of a building material could be put before suitability of purpose. Heavy wooden logs were used for flooring large houses (which increased the dead weight of upper floors and the thickness of the walls) were used because of their durability, while lighter palm trunks were more readily available, cheaper and more commonly used. This emphasis on durability, incidentally, did not add to the popularity of the cement blocks of the early 1900s which offset the advantages in this direction with their heat-conducting properties.

<sup>31</sup> *Mu'allemin* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 12, 1990.

the ground under your feet"<sup>32</sup> (Fig. 10.6.) was a further mean of connecting the traditional Ḥedjāzī to his *ḥāra*, land, town, and to the environment in general. Elements of the earth had certain familiarity about them that made people feel at home in their houses, within surrounding houses, and in nature:

... do not tell me that you are a *mi' mārī* [an architect] unless you tell me first that you have touched these stones, carried them, felt their weight and your face was covered with their dust and debris.  
(*Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 8, 1990).

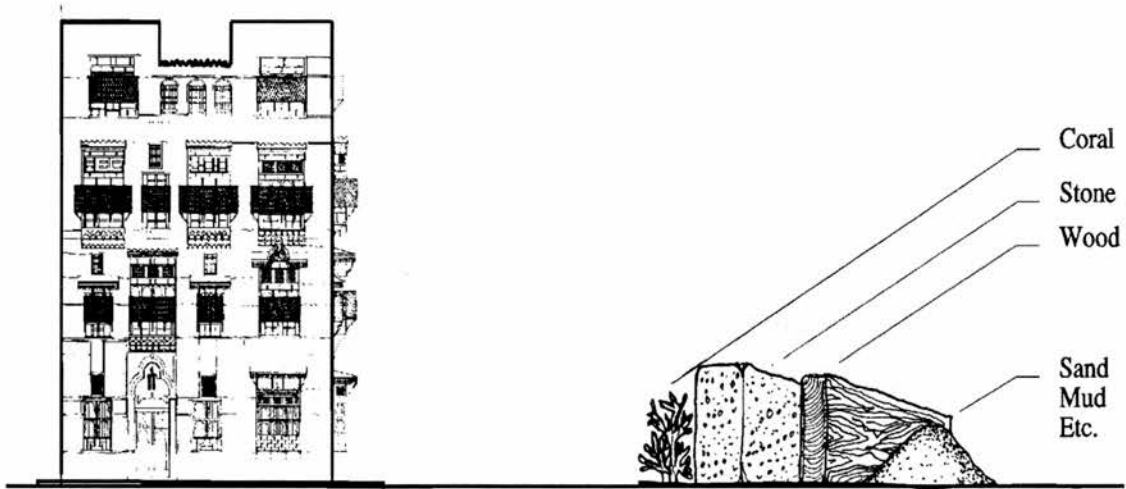


Fig. 10.6. "Stones and *baḥāh* from the ground under your feet".

### 10.1.2. The Variables

The main variable of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house that found representation in the fixed elements was that of its structure. This was due to the fact that building techniques were constantly modified and elaborated, and that what mattered to both clients and *mu'alleṃīn* was the soundness of the structure regardless of the techniques used. For instance, it did not matter whether the *mu'alleṃ* used *buniān Shāmī* or *Damāsīn* (Syrian, Damascene building technique), *Yamānī* (Yemen, Hudaidah method) *Maṣrī* (Egyptian), or *mughrabī* (Moroccan). Accordingly, and during the interviews, the *mu'alleṃīn* were hardly keen to elaborate on the importance of structural elements unless they were associated with certain meanings or unless they represented their

<sup>32</sup> As we see in chapter six, houses of the fishermen district in the city of Jeddah (*ḥārat al-baḥar*) were constructed of *ḥadjar baḥarī* (coral-stone excavated from the sea). *Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 12, 1990.

craftsmanship. An example of this would be the location of the staircase-shaft, the subterranean water-tank (*ṣehrīdj*), the suspension techniques and so on.

We discussed in chapter six that locating the staircase in a particular position in the house plan was mainly a structural problem, and was not uniform to all the houses of Ḥedjāz. However, favouring the location of the staircase-shaft towards the far end of the interior of the house was solely for the sake of privacy maintenance, and so was its concealed casement. This suggests that the means of achieving a constant such as privacy was variable and inconsistent throughout the houses of Ḥedjāz. Likewise, the location of the *ṣehrīdj* within the foundation layer of the house was also a variable. Topography and position of the house determined its location, and so did the availability of building materials. Mobile water-tanks (made out of tin barrels mounted on a donkey-drawn cart) were used in areas of hard soil and irregular topography. In whichever case, the location of the water-tank did not represent a factor of any significance to the *mu'allemin* or the residents of the house, which its construction did.

#### 10.1.2.1. House form

A more utilitarian view might relate the form of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house to human physiology, climate, technology and the available building materials. Part of this is true, for house forms were mainly influenced by the use of available building material. This should not be seen as a determining factor, since availability of materials has to be viewed alongside other constants and variables like activities in the house, the living pattern of the inhabitants, and the need for certain spatial dimensions. House form was also governed by the surrounding environment and climatic factors.

The Ḥedjāzī house did not exhibit complicated forms, or an intention to create any. The dependence of the *mu'allemin* on the simplest and the most direct of geometrical forms - like the square and the rectangle - could be easily attributed to the lack of flexible and suitable building material, lack of know-how and technology and so on. What was important at the end of the traditional 'design' process, however, was the utmost architectural simplicity and clarity of purpose. As we see in previous chapters, the *mu'allemin* of Ḥedjāz had the choice, the willpower and the capability

to create different and complicated forms, yet their equally willing compliance and conformity with the socio-cultural ethos and their respect for the environment inhibited them from doing so. However, the shape of the house did not contribute as much to the basic values and principles of traditional domestic architecture as did the other constants:

If you plant onion you will harvest onion, if you plant roses and jasmine you will harvest roses and jasmine. You will most likely need both, otherwise you would not have planted any of them to begin with. Your problems will begin when you harvest onion when you wanted roses in the first place. The fault is yours then, and you will have to go back and see what have you done initially: what was your intentions when you planted? Did you want to eat onion while your real intentions were to impress your mates with your roses? This is Ḥedjāz today, you all want to live *zai al-nāss* [like normal people, humans, properly] and at the same time, you want to be *ghair al-nāss* [different from people and from each other]. My advice cannot and will not help you unless you all decide what you want to do. (*Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 14, 1990).

The form and overall treatment of any traditional house depended on the extent of conformity in the society, at the time and to the values of its ancestral traditions. It was seen earlier that, again, a correlation could be detected between the cultural 'loosening' of form-acceptability and the emergence of unconventional or alien building forms (i.e., middle 1900s). Therefore, form in the Ḥedjāzī house was not set as a priority or the outcome of an arbitrary decision by the *mu'alleṃīn*, nor was it a determinant of any use or meaning in the house. Variant forms gained certain associative meanings and values through their constant use in time. Although one has to keep in mind that there were circumstances where a certain form could inhibit a particular use, the form of the Ḥedjāzī house was capable of sustaining more numerous uses and meanings than complex modern forms.

As discussed in the following chapters, the traditional Ḥedjāzī form allowed for a 'loose fit' between form, use and meaning. Designing for a 'tight fit' would have resulted in the creation of limits upon the possibilities of form, and change of use would have become impossible, which was not the case in traditional Ḥedjāz. Therefore, a look at the simple forms of the traditional domestic architecture of Ḥedjāz and the range of its possible uses will lead to the discovery of the possibilities inherent in such forms. The form as a factor effecting the 'traditionality' of the

Ḥedjāzī house is considered here as a semi-fixed variable (movable) because it is a personal belief that the modern uses and functions of the house would not - and could not - be hindered by the adoption of traditional forms which were very simple and straightforward. It is the principles and concepts that count.

The shape and form of the traditional house was an outcome of its spatial organization which was born out of the intimacy of contact in everyday life, as seen earlier. Forms and shapes were elaborated and differentiated from one period to another to accommodate changes in the spatial layout of the house. Hence they were not the main features of the house. They were, however, tangible expressions of the values that led to certain spatial organizations. They produced concrete metaphors for the ideals and beliefs of the society and provided solid reminders of what society valued. It is, thus, both useful and efficient to physically express different settings, to remind people of accepted behaviour within particular contexts.

The distinctive traditional features of the house that are copied and attached to modern houses, originally gave the traditional Ḥedjāzī society and its houses their character. The *rowshān* and its elaborate woodwork, the arches and parapets, all had a particular purpose that was specific to that particular society. The *rawāshīn*, the *khārdjāt* and *shīshān* maintained privacy and provided projecting semi-covered outdoor spaces, the arches had structural functions, and so on. None of these was architecturally of any formal importance but they conveyed meanings through their use over the course of time. Furthermore, the straightforward shapes and space configuration of the house and the simply applied decorations of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house - internal and external - sprang directly from construction methods, from practical requirements, from religious and socio-cultural considerations, and not least from the psychology of the people and the spirit of time.

#### 10.1.2.2. House size

The size of the house depended traditionally on the number of families occupying the house and the budget of the owner. What really mattered was the adequacy of its size for the intended functions of the house. Each inch of every room was used to its fullest capacity, leaving no space to be wasted for any reason. The



complete harmony and correlation between size and activity was obvious to see in all examined houses (chapter three), emphasizing the idea that the determinants of size were functions and activities (e.g., duration and time of the activity, who is involved, and who is included or excluded).

There also existed a deterministic relationship between spatial organization of the house, room areas and the location of household activities. As we see from previous chapters, one can rationalise the size of rooms in any traditional Ḥedjāzī house through the examination of the available building material and technology at the time of construction. Despite this fact, larger rooms were built with the available materials through the employment of different or unconventional building techniques as long as the need for a large room was functionally justified. As discussed in chapter six, in spite of the availability of *ṭurfah* (eight meters long wooden-beams), rooms were not larger than 5 m x 5 m for fear of the flooring support joists bending. However, rooms of larger dimensions were not unusual throughout the region.

### 10.1.2.3. Furniture

In any traditional Ḥedjāzī house, we are confronted with an array of objects whose only significance to us may lie in their measurability, observability and pecuniary value. This is typically a modern mode of empirical thinking which destroys the possibility of the emergence of spiritual meaning. But as we open ourselves to the world of things, we bring them meaning through our care and concern, and at the same time, these things lend meaning to our sense of identity. This was the opinion of the elderly Ḥedjāzī from the 'Afīf family, who protested to my point that furniture was, after all, just pieces of wood:

I did not sell my furniture, my carpets and even today I do not sell my cars. These are my things, ... I see my age in them, I see a film tape running by my eyes when I look at them, how can I let someone else toy with them... Can someone sell his peace of mind, no! These things give me peace of mind when I stare at them in the afternoon. ('Afīf family, Jeddah, March 12, 1991).

Beyond the inherent nostalgia of this statement was a perception of objects and furniture in accordance with their actions and implied behaviour, rather than in accordance with their specific physical characteristics. While furniture for its own sake



was of no significance to the authenticity of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house, these were used in the house for purposes of social interaction. Therefore, it is not the object itself so much as the use and meaning of the object that count for the emergence of an authentic home. The traditional Ḥedjāzīs lived with things in lasting satisfaction. Pieces of furniture remained in family possession, generation after generation. They were as dear to their hearts as the members of the family they associated with them.

We see in chapter eight how everything in the home became incorporated with the body and how the body, in turn, extended itself throughout the house through the objects in it. This two-way process or bodily integration brought subjective realities into the domain of physical existence. Characteristics of this might be discernable in numerous ways, but are very clear in the case of furniture which was not only an essential component of home life but the time-keeper of life itself.

Therefore, the house, its objects, furniture and decoration derive meaning through daily household use and symbolic value. They were not 'lifeless' or impartial accessories, they actively participated in creating and maintaining meanings and strong relations with the past. This, however, does not mean that furniture was a must for a house to become a home, rather it was the use of furniture and its meanings that were constants. If they were used only to impress, they were simply mute and quantifiable objects that could be replaced as used-commodities. On the other hand, if they were used as things that spoke the language of human experience then they were part of human life in the house. Any piece of furniture in the Ḥedjāzī house expressed its meanings in the ensemble of all the features of the living space. They served their functions just as the structural elements of the house. However, the functions mentioned here do not refer only to practical use without a hint of spiritual considerations. In traditional Ḥedjāz, some furniture was laden with cultural meanings and played an active role in communicating a common cultural language. This assisted in indicating the behaviour appropriate to the context (i.e., *jalsat al-rowshān*). As we saw earlier, the presence of a person setting on a *merkāz* in a *madjlis* indicated the importance of that individual, and hence the appropriate manner of communicating with him.

# Summary

	CONSTANTS	VARIABLES
NON-FIXED (Non-physical or Socio-cultural elements)	A) Adherence to religion	
	B) Climatic consonance	
	C) Client participation	
	D) Gradual growth	
	E) Everyday use	
	F) Meaning	
	G) Privacy	
	H) Common cultural language	
	I) Group solidarity	
	J) Self-representation	
	K) Ownership	
	L) Hierarchical order of class, gender and age	
	M) Inside-outside relationships	
SEMI-FIXED (Re-arrangeable elements)		A) House form
		B) House size
		C) Furniture
FIXED ELEMENTS (Non-movable elements)	A) Neighbourhood configuration	* Structure
	B) Spatial organization of the house	
	C) Multi-purpose rooms	
	D) Building Materials	

Table 10.T1. Summary of the constants and variables observed in the production of the traditional Hedjazi home and its environment.

We will see in the following chapter how the shifts in perception of the role of the designers and builders, combined with a socio-cultural shift in the perception of self, family and house all resulted in the destruction of the distinctive characteristics of the traditional society as a whole and its architecture. This change, manifest in the introduction of new socio-cultural and architectural ideas, instead of seeking an accommodation with the culturally-accepted matrix, usually conflicted with it,

disregarded it or totally destroyed it. The consequences were that the newly-emerging social ideas were established as norms in themselves, and the continuous processes of the transmission of tradition was severed for good.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### SOCIETAL CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### SOCIETAL CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

---

#### 11.1. Social change and its impact: what went wrong? How?

In chapter ten we have analyzed the elements without which no traditional Hedjāzī house could be imagined. It remains to be seen how modern architects can extract from these elements what would allow them to produce 'authentic' houses today. We need to shed some light on issues like the ability of modern architects to maintain the same balance of continuity and change that the traditional *mu'allemin* mastered through time, and the competence of today's society to perceive its houses in the light of yesterday's realisation. But, as discussed in the last chapter, the majority of factors that lent the Hedjāzī house its distinctive characters were more societal than physical. Should we not then start looking for answers to these questions by investigating the major deviations between the traditional Hedjāzī society and that of today? Furthermore, if modernity is taking over as a universal culture, how can we - as modern researchers - reassess the transition from tradition to modernity in such a way that would enable us to adjust the course of the domestic architecture in Hedjāz?

To approach this investigation, we need to identify the areas of major conflict between traditional and modern Hedjāzī societies. Issues like the perception of individuals, families and communities are placed first in this chapter's list of tasks. In discussing these issues, direct comparisons between yesterday and today's societies are conducted on each case. The aim here is to establish the reactions of two distinctive time-periods to the same phenomenon, that of home and its meaning.

It remains to mention that the conditions of the modern Hedjāzī society that are represented in this chapter are based primarily on my own perception of today's social attitudes, and the way they are perceived by my interviewees. No empirical research has been conducted to support my argument other than the observable results of the modern socio-cultural changes that are reflected on the modern domestic architecture of Hedjāz.

I will start with a brief definition of society and community from a traditional Ḥedjāzī point of view in order to clarify where things went wrong in the shift from tradition to modernity. First, a community would have been understood as a group of people living in the same area, within which their social, psychological and physical needs were satisfied. Secondly, the unit of measurement for space in traditional Ḥedjāzī towns was the individual, while the common determinant of the arrangement of space (spatial structure) was the family. Thirdly, from a sociological point of view, the family as a social group, where face-to-face contacts represented the most immediate form of social interaction, was the smallest unit for measuring social groups. Finally, a social group would have been perceived as a group with a system of relationships in which members were united by a sense of emotional solidarity, common purpose, and within a culture which defined their social roles and standards, based on traditional values and common norms. These values and norms, along with the particularities of different Ḥedjāzī sub-cultures, were measures by which members of Ḥedjāzī towns and *ḥārāt* were differentiated from non-members.

#### 11.1.1. Social transformation

When groups are subjected to environmental stress various strategies are possible. They can change the macro-environment (e.g., move); they can alter the physical environment at the meso- or micro-scale; they can change their behavior; they can change their values and perceptions and thus reduce cognitive dissonance; the group can break down. (Amos Rapoport).<sup>1</sup>

The environmental stress that took place in Ḥedjāz in the middle 1900s is usually described as 'Westernization,' or 'Modernization.' My interpretation of this process of change is that it was an increase of both individualism and materialism of a once collectivistic society. This was a period when people were becoming obsessed with material possessions. The traditional values of modesty and selflessness were being abandoned, along with the system of inherited norms and habitual ways of doing things. The highly pragmatic traditions of the past, which incorporated a common

---

<sup>1</sup> Rapoport, Amos. "Cross-Cultural Aspects of Environmental Design." Human Behaviour and Environment: Advances in Theory and Research. Eds., Irwin Altman, et al. New York: Plenum Press, 1980. 35.



sense of group identity, public welfare, belonging, etc., within the ecology and available resources of the time were being replaced with individualism and social values of class distinction based on economic status.

This increase of individualism and materialism brought about several types of socio-cultural transformation. People's attitudes towards house, self, groups, religion, universe, home, and life altogether were altered. This did not happen in some mysterious way as many researchers who have dealt with the problem seem to suggest<sup>2</sup>. There are usually pragmatic political and economic reasons for this kind of change, which then create cultural repercussions that can no longer be explained exclusively by their political and economic origins. The interest of this research, however, is not to test the degree of modernization, since that notion is notoriously vague and difficult to pin down empirically<sup>3</sup>. What is of concern to us is those patterns of transformation that are related to and affected the production of homes in the region.

Since the 1950s, a house has been thought of less as the locus of family life and more as a symbol of social status. But how did modernization in Ḥedjāz led to such changes in societal attitudes? A similar question has been analyzed by Packard, Berger, Buttimer, Klapp, Relph, and Seamon<sup>4</sup> who have all suggested that modernity itself, with its growing social and geographical mobility, has created a 'rootless' person whose sense of identity is weakened by loss of a significant sense of home. Modernization has disintegrated the social, cultural and material distinctiveness of places (whether one examines regions, communities, neighbourhoods, or houses).

---

<sup>2</sup> Examples of this attitude could be seen in many Ph.D. researches in the past few years, especially those by native Ḥedjāzī students. For reasons of cultural sensitivity, I will refrain from mentioning specific examples.

<sup>3</sup> Although signs of its impact could be detected (part of which is discussed in chapter two). The first trends of modernization in the entire Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the adoption of master plans of main cities, often prepared with extensive participation of foreign consultants. These plans imitate Western counterparts in almost all respects. Land-uses, subdivision layouts, lot sizes and building set-backs are firmly established and gauged to produce housing environments that coincide with a modern urban and suburban view of development capable of coping with increasing number of cars.

<sup>4</sup> See Packard, Vance. A Nation of Strangers. New York: McKay, 1972; Berger, P., Berger, B., and Kellner, H. The Homeless Mind. England: Penguin, 1974; Buttimer, Ann and D. Seamon, eds. The Human Experience of Space and Place. London: Croom Helm, 1980; Klapp, Orrin E. Collective Search for Identity. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston; Relph, Edward. Places and Placelessness. London: Pion, 1976; Seamon, David. A Geography of the Life World. London: Croom Helm, 1979.

Individuals - confronted with a placeless, homogeneous landscape, ceaselessly moving from one house, community and region to another - could develop neither an imagery of self based on locale, nor a sense of belonging to a specific landscape of home, community or region.

Basically, the society we are dealing with is directed by tradition. Historically, it organized itself around time-honoured cultural beliefs and patterns. Necessity and survival were key organizing principles, whereby tradition was the accepted mode of conformity and any deviation from it was neither desired nor tolerated. Conformity was ensured through 'fitting in' at all costs. As discussed in chapters seven, eight and nine, home in this society was a definable spatial entity shared by all members. There was a collective identification of 'place' which concretized the grounds of home. Such societal attitudes are best illustrated in the traditional Hedjāzī *ḥāra* (residential quarter) of the 18th and 19th centuries which performed important functions in areas of social control, socialization and mutual help for its residents who found intimate and lasting bonds of a variety of relationships.

By the middle 1900s<sup>5</sup>, the traditional mode of social organization began to shift to a modern one; to a universal society. The defining characteristic of this society was the shift from **place** to **space** which, in turn, resulted in changing **person** into **category**<sup>6</sup>, a social structure that was more complex and less harmonious. This shift from 'tradition-directed' to 'self-directed' modes of social organization had direct impacts on the domestic architecture, and the concept of home in Hedjāz. And while the traditional Hedjāzī community was able to absorb the habits and traditions of other cultures and gradually integrate them into a unified and distinctive culture, the modern community could only be coloured with each and every newly introduced culture in

---

<sup>5</sup> As discussed in chapter two, the middle 1900s was the beginning of the social transformation of Hedjāz. Class emergence in the Hedjāzī society associated the size and layout of houses to the socio-economic status of their owners. Apparently there also began to emerge - in addition to a hierarchy of wealth - a hierarchy of status, of ethnic groups and of power amongst the residents of a typical Hedjāzī town, made possible and encouraged by the Ottoman authority.

<sup>6</sup> Terminologies adopted from Klapp, Orrin E. Collective Search for Identity. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969. *Passim*.

such a pace that did not leave a chance for a unique culture to develop and mature<sup>7</sup>. Today, neither the modern society nor its domestic architecture can recreate the kind of socio-cultural institutions<sup>8</sup> that the traditional Ḥedjāzīs enjoyed.

Riesman categorizes the social transformation of a tradition-directed society as "*the inner-directed*."<sup>9</sup> To a great extent, Riesman's category fits the Ḥedjāzī society of the middle 1900s<sup>10</sup> when individuals were beginning to be relatively released from the bonds of tradition due to extensive travels and direct contacts with the influx of foreigners in the area as discussed in chapter two. The result of this social transformation was the emergence of a mode of social organization where the community was faced with the possibility of expanding boundaries and flexible memberships. This allowed individuals to choose their communities and to seek membership in the group of their desire. Consequently, each individual was allowed to choose the means by which he could join different communities, and to represent himself accordingly. One example of the result of this attitude would be the individual 'styles' of houses that emerged without the supervision of a culturally-accepted matrix. The concept of home was then reduced from the traditional spiritual home to the modern physical and spatial one. This is discussed in more details later in this chapter and in chapter twelve.

### 11.1.2. Consequence of social transformation

The shifts of socio-cultural attitudes from the traditional society to the modern one have had its dramatic impact on both the natural and built environments of Ḥedjāz. While it could be debated whether the modern architectural 'models' were responsible for the social change or vice versa, it can safely be stated that the rapid

---

<sup>7</sup> The difference between the traditional Ḥedjāzī 'acculturation' and the modern cultural 'assimilation' is that the former was the absorption of strong influences from different societies, while the latter is the actual loss of a distinct Ḥedjāzī culture.

<sup>8</sup> By 'institution' I mean the traditional contextual matrix discussed in chapters one, three, six, seven and eight: socio-cultural, natural and built environments, meanings of home and home-range,...etc.

<sup>9</sup> The 'inner-directed' society as defined by Riesman is without a home yet still orienting to one. This home is associated with a 'place' rather than with a person, family and community. See Riesman, David. The Lonely Crowd. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961. 16-18.

<sup>10</sup> The traditional *ḥāra* until the late 19th century was a manifestation of the social stratification system which was primarily based on kinship (since religion is constantly Islam), and only secondarily on wealth.

changes that took place in the middle 1900s affected the society through the inappropriate forms of the built environment (as in the process of change shown in figure 11.1.). Along with the new architectural expression came, among other things, a new morality. Again it is useless to speculate which came first or which of either made the other happen. It is enough to note that they coexisted, having a joint validity that was indivisible. What is visible today, however, is a disintegrated culture resulting from the destruction of the traditional Ḥedjāzī form of family organization, the prevention of the formation of homogeneous groups for mutual help, hence, the formation of a culturally-accepted matrix.

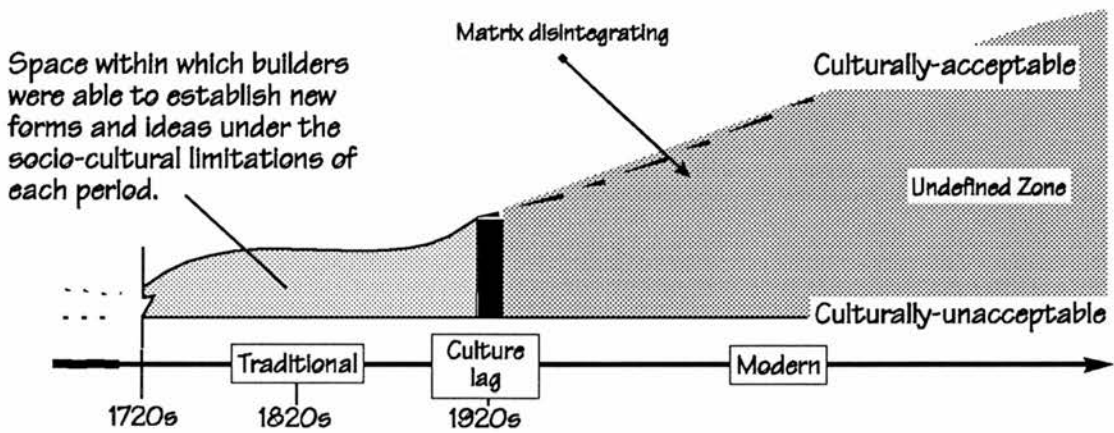


Fig. 11.1. A culture lag took place in the beginning of the 1900s followed by a disintegration of the traditional culture and the emergence of a bond-free society.

In the following discussion I will shed some light on what constituted a traditional community and the consequences brought about by the shift in social organization. This will consider the effect of such changes on the social definitions of self, family, community, house and home. The reader will notice how closely the different issues addressed here are interrelated, but in general, the sources of social change seem to revolve around two major causes: changes in economic modes and pretentious foreign acculturation.

#### 11.1.2.1. A shift in the adherence to religion

The forms and spatial organization of the traditional house of Ḥedjāz evolved gradually from the requirements of a lifestyle based on religion and were not imposed as an intellectual exercise from outside this culture. In chapter ten we see that there

has been constant development of houses, and there has always been continuity. The warrant of this continuity has been adherence to religion and tradition and their disciplines<sup>11</sup>. The anchor of such change was continuity safeguarded by the traditional lifestyle: a loop without which change could not have become a part of a cyclic progression, and a reciprocal process in which person housed world and world housed person.

In the process of liberating themselves from the ties of family and tradition, the modern H̱edjāzīes seem to have also liberated themselves from religion and its bonding, presumably to be more receptive of changes and adoptive of non-native lifestyles (Fig. 11.2.). This, I believe, was a total misconception on their side, because the traditional H̱edjāzīes interacted with many cultures, and their adaptation to non-native lifestyles was not restrained. Based on arguments by Eliade and Greenberg<sup>12</sup>, we may say that religious doctrines liberate the individual and the group by defining acceptable behaviour within which social, economic, political and personal goals may be achieved. Greenberg rightly thinks that the bonds established by culture and religion are a precondition for life, liberty and happiness, for they define freedoms and other qualities of life that are commonly valued. Therefore, to be free is to voluntarily accept limits on behaviour, to agree to abide by laws, conventions and moral and ethical standards in the conduct of one's life. The appropriateness of such opinions is manifest in the attitude of relaxed socio-cultural norms adopted by the modern H̱edjāzīes, which neither produced the results they desire, nor did it fully liberate them from what is left of the cultural conventions. Instead, it left them somewhere in between: in a zone of non-belonging to either a foreign culture or to their own.

The first and most recognizable deviation from adherence to Islam as a way of life in modern H̱edjāz is what I perceive to be today's societal values that emphasize individuality over communality. The weakness of modern H̱edjāzīes' adherence to religion - as I see it - had its major impacts on their lives, most of which are outside the scope of this research. However, one example of this is today's

---

<sup>11</sup> Religious beliefs and cultural customs, both are collective nouns comprising, norms, habits, love, fear, do's and do not's. In the traditional H̱edjāzī society, people adhered almost equally to both.

<sup>12</sup> See Eliade, Mercea. Patterns in Comparative religion. London: Sheed and Ward, 1958. *Passim*.; Greenberg, Allan. "Thoughts On Freedom and Imitation." Imitation and Innovation in Architectural Design. Ed. Lucien Steil. New York: Academy Editions/St.Martin's Press, 1988. 39.



deteriorating relationship between house and mosque. Traditionally, nowhere better than the mosque provided the common ground for the discussion of the neighbourhood affairs, exchange of ideas and the establishment of different policies in the *ḥāra*. The association of the mosque with the 'house of God,' made it not only a sacred place where promises are kept and contracts are honoured, but also a continuation of daily life under the umbrella of Islam as the guiding light. This fact provided links between the mosque and the rest of the activities of the traditional neighbourhood<sup>13</sup>.

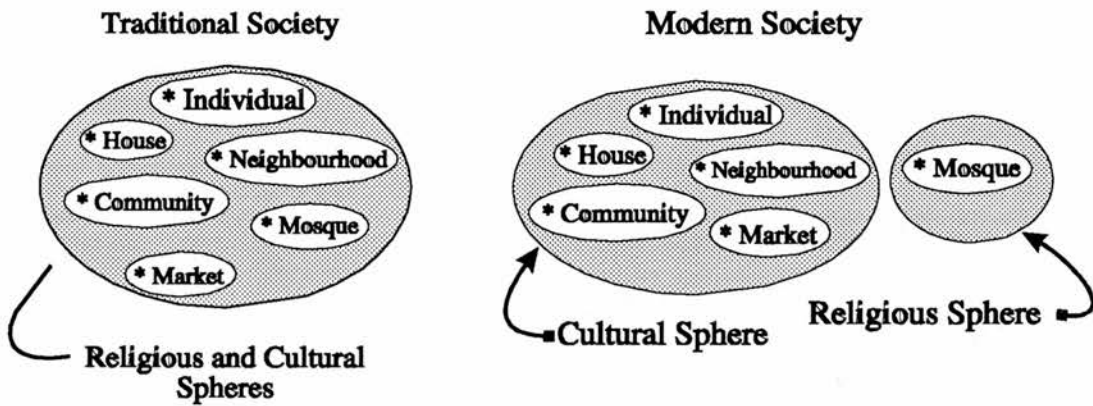


Fig. 11.2. The division between culture and religion in modern Hedjaz assisted in the social and physical disintegration of communities.

As discussed later in this chapter, most of the perceived ills of today's Hedjazi society was attributed by my interviewees to *"the deviation from the straight course of God."*<sup>14</sup> While this should not necessarily mean that the traditional Hedjazi were better 'Muslims' than their modern counterparts, it simply indicates that the disintegration of culture and religion that gradually took place at the beginning of the modernization process (middle 1900s), have also resulted in the split of the society itself, its beliefs, and its products<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> For example, communal prayers were used as a time-scale: *"I will meet you in the mosque after the noon-prayer,"* or *"We started working after we gathered in the mosque for the dawn prayer, and finished after the dusk prayer."*

<sup>14</sup> Mu'alleem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 9, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> The anonymity of a large metropolis like Jeddah for example, diminishes the chances of recognition. An individual who is submerged in this anonymity can behave 'carelessly' without fear of others' condemnation. Surely, as explained by mu'alleem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, taking away such a constrain on behaviour frees an individual to be tempted by satan, knowing forgiveness is simply between himself and God and not his neighbours or community.



### 11.1.2.2. A shift in the cultural-language

The traditional Ḥedjāzī culture could be regarded as a 'high-context' culture in which socio-cultural signs and symbols, as well as behavioural conventions were known and easily read by all members of the society<sup>16</sup>. In traditional Ḥedjāz, socio-cultural messages were those in *"which most of the information [was] either in the physical context [signs and symbols] or internalized [inherent] in the person, while very little [was] in the coded and explicitly transmitted part of the message [verbal language]."*<sup>17</sup> In contrast, the modern culture of Ḥedjāz could be considered as a "low-context" culture because communication depends on explicit code as a compensation for the weakness or non-existence of a common implicit (non-verbal) language<sup>18</sup>.

We also discussed in chapters seven, eight and ten that the traditional Ḥedjāzīes had systems of *'ādāt wa taqālīd* (norms and habits) and *'arāff* (cultural convention, customs or protocols) representing beliefs and values that led to common world views and to the characteristic way the built environment was shaped. The traditional conventions, especially the nonverbal unstated realm of culture, while representing the medium of cultural interchange that provided patterns for thoughts and actions, have also influenced behaviour in the deepest and most subtle ways. The unconscious patterns that controlled people's lives (like body language, clothing, behaviour, and other physical cues in the environment) were used extensively to enhance behaviour in different situations (e.g., addressing or approaching a person sitting in the centre of the room). Although we say that this cultural-language was learned (and modified gradually through the course of time), behavioural patterns,

---

<sup>16</sup> The modern anthropologist, Edward Hall categorizes cultural groups into "low-context" and "high-context" cultures. "Low-context" cultures are those highly individualized cultures in which there is relatively little involvement between people. "High-context" cultures are those in which people are deeply involved with each other, and where meanings are widely shared, based on simple messages with deep, free-flowing meanings. In the sense of this classification, I considered the traditional Ḥedjāzī culture to be a "high-context" culture where the problem of mutual understanding was not as difficult as it is today, because most transactions were conducted between people of similar socio-cultural backgrounds. See Hall, Edward T. *Beyond Culture*. New York: Anchor Books, 1976. 9-40.

<sup>17</sup> This is referred to in chapter ten as 'the common cultural-language.' See Hall, 1976. 91. (words between brackets are added).

<sup>18</sup> The major characteristics of 'culture' in general is that it is not innate, but learned; and that it is shared and in effect defines the boundaries of different groups and sub-cultures within the society.

habitual responses and ways of interacting - once learned - gradually sunk below the surface of consciousness and became matters of fact. These made predictable the behaviour of individuals in different settings, and provided the order that was observed in all nature. The absence of this most obvious and taken for granted realm of culture today means the total disturbance of other realms, which are discussed later in this chapter.

In traditional Ḥedjāz, socio-cultural signs and symbols per se were obviously not adequate to facilitate mutual communication and understanding. Sometimes, they were clear and concrete (e.g., the open door as a sign of generosity), but often, elements overlapped, leading to a complex, ambiguous system of interrelationships that only a shared knowledge could make comprehensible (i.e., a cultural-language). However, the mere presence of a common cultural-language alone may not guarantee proper communication, hence appropriate behaviour: socio-cultural cues (including physical ones) were first observed and supported by a willingness to obey them once they were noticed and understood. This process was not only taken for granted, but was readily sought and followed in any traditional *ḥāra* for the sake of one's reputation and well-being as discussed in chapter eight.

Furthermore, this cultural-language included the organization of time and space as two functionally interrelated aspects of the traditional culture. Because time and space were organized in a manner understood by all the members - as discussed in chapter three - they became integrated in the cultural conventions: when to visit, where to sit, who goes where and when, and so many other procedures that were basic vocabularies in this language. The overlapping between activities and time-frames further complicated their organization, but in a comprehensive way that allowed many activities to be carried out simultaneously within the same place, so smoothly that no conflicts or interruptions occurred because someone did not understand the language and disturbed the rhythm<sup>19</sup>.

In today's Ḥedjāz, the traditional cultural-language no longer brings forth the Ḥedjāzī environment, except in memory or legends; nor do the modern Ḥedjāzī have a new cultural-language in which new communities and homes could be organized.

---

<sup>19</sup> For example, a business meeting today can allow individuals to break for prayer if they were a bit out of sync with others. More examples are discussed later in this chapter.

Communities have become culturally speechless and homeless<sup>20</sup>. The speed by which this process took place resulted in restructuring the traditional cultural-language in the counterproductive ways that are discussed later in this chapter.

The impact of the absence of a unified cultural-language on house and neighbourhood is manifest in the spatial and meaning organization of both<sup>21</sup>. The importance of the traditional congruence between these two was manifested in the role they both played in the communication process between members of the community and between builders and clients. The organization of communication was an important way in which the domestic architecture and the social organization of the *ḥāra* was related. The need for a cultural-language to evoke appropriate behaviour was situation-dependent: people had to notice and understand cues in the environment identifying the setting, then they had to behave accordingly. If the cues were not noticed or understood, appropriate behaviour was not likely to take place without the aid of verbal language (which is mainly the case today). This is one problem that the traditional society of Ḥedjāz did not suffer from because of the comprehensiveness and clarity of both physical and socio-cultural cues. People were able to grasp the figurative meaning in a context rather than a literal meaning of the word:

Of course we knew the habits of each other, but we also knew that homes were secrets [secret places] and each family stood on its own in front of God. Some people are conservative and religious, some are liberal and only fellow travellers. All this could be seen in the *madjlis* as if it were written *bil-bonṭ al-‘arīḍ* [in large letters on the walls of the reception room]. (‘Afīf family, Jeddah, March 12, 1990).

To add to the complexity of this communication problem, traditional Ḥedjāzīs avoided verbalizing what they took for granted - the basic codes of interacting with each other. For example, what was traditionally communicated non-verbally is today under the domain of the spoken language, since it would not be perceived or understood otherwise. At the same time, most of these issues (e.g., changing postures, addressing people in central positions) lay within the domain of culturally-sensitive issues that were hard, if not impossible, to make explicit. Collectively, these two

---

<sup>20</sup> Although there exist a modern common cultural-language, but it is directly tied to self-image and representation (e.g., the use of material possessions to advertise one's socio-economic status.)

<sup>21</sup> Meaning organization: who communicates with who, what is being communicated, when, where, and in what context.

factors (shift from non-verbal to verbal language, and the sensitivity of doing so) combine today to place a freeze on the application of both, with no one daring to handle the problem:

...you can not go around telling people that "This is a senior member of our community, by God address him properly, didn't you notice that he was sitting *fī waṣṭ al maḥīl* [in the centre of the gathering]." Or "Please turn your eyes because we are approaching a private area." Or "By God cough or make a sound so that the women in the house will know that you are coming or you are sitting in the room." What is worse than this, something that happened to me some days ago: I had to tell some people not to follow me until I looked for a *ṭarīḡ* [notified the women of the presence of a guest] as they were dashing inside the house without my permission. God is Great! If you told an old Ḥedjāzī to do any of these things - assuming that he was ignorant of them - it would be the last you would see of him in your entire life. Let people learn and understand their *'ādāt* [customs] by themselves, or may they suffer the worst of consequences for they are not children or *adjānīb* [foreigners]. (Al-Makkī family, Makkah, May 19, 1990).

While this furious statement by the senior member of al-Makkī family points to the difficulty of shifting from non-verbal to verbal communication. It also indicates that only children and non-natives were expected to be told what to do in different situations. The whole concept of reading social and physical cues seems to be treated as a matter of fact that even the mere question did not appeal to the senior Ḥedjāzī, and forced him to conclude that it was only natural for me (as a modern Ḥedjāzī) to be asking about it.

Furthermore, traditional society clearly distinguished between private and public, and between internal and external as far as places were concerned. Communal perception of what constituted each of these places provided individuals with the necessary cues with which they understood codes of behaviour appropriate to each of these places. These codes created visible and invisible boundaries to maintain privacy (e.g., body language, interpersonal boundaries, group memberships, socio-physical boundaries and other culture conventions). In chapters seven, eight, and ten we discussed how the maintenance of privacy in traditional Ḥedjāz depended on implicit codes of behaviour protocols (e.g., "*we were all the guardians of each other.*"), and explicit norms and rules (e.g., opening a window in a house separated from another by less than a five meters-wide street) represented by building regulation set forth by the head of the guild of master-builders.

In modern society, however, the distinction between different places is more obvious than that of the traditional one. Not only do modern houses have less distinctions within the ‘outsiders’ category (Fig. 11.3.), they also depend more on physical privacy-regulators to compensate for the loss of social ones (traditionally evoked by cultural-language like *ṭarīḡ* = give way). The modern notion of privacy maintenance is mainly concerned with separating the individual from the outside world, and with self-image as opposed to traditional family privacy. Today the ‘real/inner-self’ should not be seen in public and must be disguised by a set of external ‘selves’ to be presented in appropriate occasions. Acceptability by others seems to be the primary concern, which leads to what *mu‘allem* Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin considered as “modern dishonesty.” In general, the modern Ḥedjāzī society is characterized by more flexibility in its responses to and control over private spaces, while imposing new constraints such as individuality.

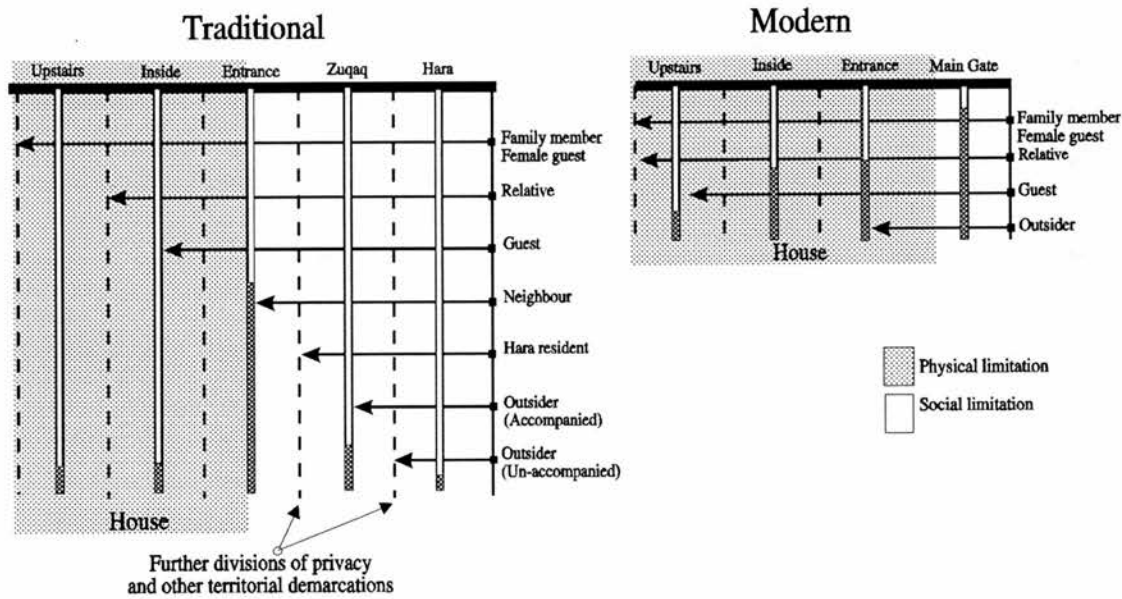


Fig. 11.3. The modern notion of privacy has less distinction between the social status of visitors, while depending more on physical filters to regulate people's circulation.

The notion of privacy maintenance can also help to illustrate the consequences of social organization around a set of individually-derived codes of behaviour: today, and in spite of the distance left between house-plots, it requires all manner of techniques to maintain the privacy of the house, most of which are physical (e.g., high walls, screens and barriers between houses). At the same time, as discussed later, a greater part of the house is assigned to semi-private and public interaction. The following example will show the extent of this problem by drawing a contrast between the mechanisms used to maintain privacy in both modern and traditional houses.



The maintenance of privacy in a modern house, in the absence of a common cultural-language requires a number of actions by the dwellers. For example the *"not at home"* message that the unexpected guest gets today is one of the defensive measures developed: the house is private, therefore, to be in private, one must claim to be absent. This is mainly to do with the cultural organization of time, space and their meaning. The privacy of the house was violated by someone who did not follow the appropriate social cue concerning time organization simply because there is not one that is culturally-understood or agreed upon. Today, people in Ḥedjāz are increasingly placed in a position in which culture can no longer be depended on to produce reliable 'readings' of what other people are going to do next. They are

constantly in a position of interacting with fellow Ḥedjāzīes on a case-by-case basis. Take the common modern Ḥedjāzī confusion of house visitors as an example: what was traditionally accepted as the rule of privacy (the deeper and higher you go inside the house, the closer you are to the family occupying the house) is no longer recognized. As illustrated in figure (11.4.), modern reception-areas could be located in the deepest section of the house, and could also be located in upper floors. A visitor has to await proper cues to be provided by his host (e.g., direction of the reception-area) for the appropriate behaviour to take place (i.e., lower his gaze, follow the host, await further cues or verbal codes)<sup>22</sup>.

Furthermore, the adoption of foreign systems of organizing time, space and their meanings as an important part of the cultural-language, aggravated this situation. These systems appear arbitrary and imposed; that is, learned anew. Because they are so thoroughly learned as a part of the package of foreign acculturation, they became

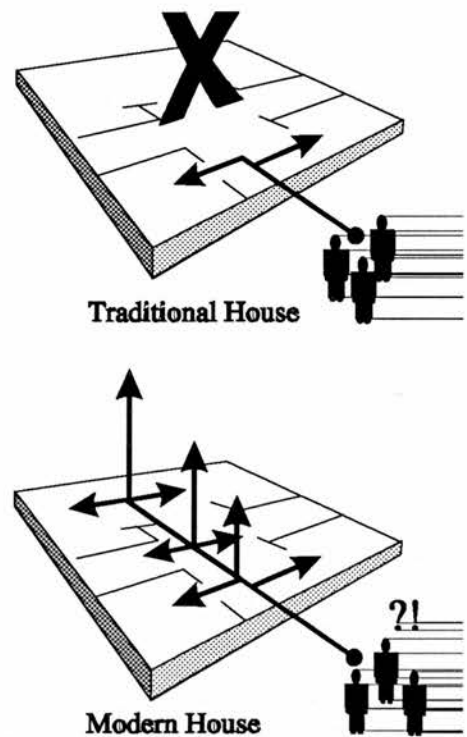


Fig. 11.4. The house seems haphazardly arranged until the system is understood and the code can be read.

<sup>22</sup> This is a pattern which corresponds to urban size: small settlements foster systemic controls, while large settlements produce asystemic controls.



genuinely integrated into today's Ḥedjāzī culture and are regarded as the most suitable and logical way of organizing life. Therefore, they are treated as the only reality that is applied indiscriminately to all situations. Foreign time/space systems were not inherent in the traditional Ḥedjāzīes' own rhythms and creative drives<sup>23</sup>:

...the old Arabs were so characterized by their respect for time that they became the subject of the proverb *mawā 'īd al 'Arab* (Arab timing). We [traditional Ḥedjāzīes] maintained the same respect for time. In my day, and although we had all the time in the world, when someone knocked at my door at two o'clock [siesta time], I had no doubt that it was an emergency and that I was the only one who could help. Today when someone knocks on my door whenever he feels like it, the emergency is in my house for I have to immediately rearrange my time, my *madjlis* and my activities to receive him...forgive me but I cannot sympathize with you young Ḥedjāzīes. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 9, 1990).

#### 11.1.2.3. A shift in the perception of family and group

Hearts were righteous, full of nobility, gallantry, love, bravery, magnanimity, manhood and fellowship: *Kānat all-Widjīh fīhā moiyyah* [*lit.* faces were full of water = bashful, self-conscious, timid, full of dignity, consideration and courtesy to others]... (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī*, Jeddah, March 29, 1990).

This statement by the *mu'allem* (discussed in chapter nine) indicates a number of notions that were prevalent in the traditional Ḥedjāzī *ḥāra*. It emphasises the existence of common mores and ethics between members of a traditional neighbourhood and the solidarity that resulted from their common purpose, intentions and actions. Other traditional Ḥedjāzī proverbs like: "*Do not enter a paradise that does not have people*," or "*The pleasure of food is lost if the meal is not shared*" also implies that the community - beginning with the family - was the home of all members of the traditional Ḥedjāzī society. All this was summarized in the wishful statement by one of my interviewees that is discussed in chapter eight:

I want my *madjlis* to be full of people - family, neighbours, friends, relatives, children, every body, every body. *Al-bait ma yiḥiyyā illā*

---

<sup>23</sup> In traditional Ḥedjāz, work and leisure were much more integrated than in today's society. In the modern individual state, leisure, work and social relaxation are very separate slices of the day/week/month/year and do not always follow natural rhythms.

*bi' ahlū wi zouārūh* [A house gains life only from the number of family members who occupy it and the guests who stay]...(Al-Makkī, May 18, Jeddah, 1990).

As also discussed in chapter eight, the fulfilment of *al-doniyyāh al-barrāniyyah* (external world) in traditional Ḥedjāz involved sincere care for neighbours and relatives and one's reputation. To achieve a good home, the traditional Ḥedjāzīes were conscious about being in a neighbourhood in which they cared to maintain a respectful friendly relationship with its members. The precondition of satisfactory living was the individual's ability to achieve healthy family relationship, and then extend this to the rest of the neighbourhood. As discussed in chapters seven and eight, the group represented a connection with the land and neighbourhood, while the land represented a connection between the house and the universe; the larger home of man.

By the middle 1900s, the traditional Ḥedjāzīes began to suffer from partial disintegration when group participation and commitment fell off as communities grew larger, more complex and heterogeneous. The resulting societal ties between the individual, his family or the group in general, tended to be weaker as they diversified. Multiple groups existed, those who were both non-localized and overlapping, where people belong simultaneously to different groups and sub-cultures. My observations led me to believe that this has allowed individuals more freedom to present themselves as independent beings. It has also allowed for more 'choice' as to what to dress and eat, how to interact, behave and dwell. Naturally, the variability among individuals within one group has increased. This 'freedom of choice' has led each individual to become a representative of almost a unique culture of his own. Individual differences and choice play a greater role in the modern society than that of the traditional Ḥedjāz because of the lack of a cultural frame-work or a socially-accepted matrix by which people would abide. An objective sociological study of these phenomena would be difficult and contentious, but are nonetheless of major concern to Arabian and Muslim scholars.

Once again we are faced with interrelated cultural issues, each affecting the other in a dialectic reminiscent of that of previous chapters. The issue of family and group solidarity and the resulting social cohesion (discussed in chapters two, eight and ten) was amongst the main virtues of the traditional Ḥedjāzī community that cast its influence on the physical layout of the *ḥāra*, the house and the character of towns. As

we see later in this chapter, the 'sense of community' experienced by traditional Hedjāzīs was not only brought about by shared responsibilities, decision making, and common purpose, but also by the shared physical environment. The social and physical maintenance of the *ḥāra* was not only confined to the State, but also to the community.

Group and family solidarity not only meant harmonious relations with society, it also meant a steady connection with those who once lived in the place. For example, the traditional family houses and domestic objects were symbols of the past - symbolising collective memories by signifying elements in individuals' identities as symbols of past experiences and relationships. These are disappearing from today's houses in order to avoid any sign of 'backwardness.' However, for families that feel threatened by the rapid social change, these symbols are immediately revived to give a sense of order and continuity. On the other hand, these same 'tools' are used by individuals who want to gain membership in special social groups by displaying symbols that convey hints of past identities, and as signs of belonging to prominent traditional families of Hedjāz. They seek the same 'rootedness' that was grounded traditionally in the familiarity of knowing and being known in a particular place.

Another virtue of traditional group solidarity was the hierarchical order of age that was analyzed in chapters eight and ten. The absence of such an order in the modern society constitutes a great loss for some, with their diminishing role in the community. For example, apart from the intervention of the elderly in community disputes and major decision making in the *ḥāra*, the present day supremacy of socio-economic status over the traditional age status restructured values and priorities. The elderly in traditional Hedjāz not only played the roles of the authority, advisors, municipality, and courts in most cases, they were the gauges of change and continuity, the standard by which norms and habits were measured, and the establishers of morals and values. One can only imagine what the presence of such groups within a neighbourhood on daily basis would have done to the sense of community. While the status of the age groups within the modern Hedjāzī family is still maintained, they are prevented from playing their traditional role because they are isolated from the rest of the family (except on grand occasions). The main cause of this isolation is the disintegration of the extended family houses and the separation of children from direct contact with grandparents on daily basis. As discussed earlier:

No child, a man of your age, or even one of the rich merchants of Jeddah, passed by my *maṣṭabah* [outdoor sitting-platform] without greeting me and may be humbly asking me for advice. No one would stroll or swear before an older person, not a man to his own brother or even to his wife as long as one [a senior member] was present. Not because I would deprive them of their daily bread or prevent them from drinking water or breathing air. It was simply the spirit of the past, people gave you your respect because you were senior, you knew more about life and you were worth learning from. I am not telling you a story about *Al-shāṭir Ḥasan* [a folk-tale about a famous Arabian personality], I am talking about daily routines that we [elderly folks] never thought about until these days when we sit and remember the past. If *'amak fūlān* [lit. your uncle = an elderly] asked you to do this or that, you would not question him, even if you were not related to him, as long as you lived with him in the same *ḥāra*. Young Ḥedjāzīs today settle for their school education, they do not learn the real life from the street, and your televisions would not tell you how people behaved in your own *ḥāra*. (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 14, 1990).

*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin's* statement "*to learn from the street*" is an indirect way of saying that the younger generations of Ḥedjāz are deprived the opportunity to learn from the elderly of the *ḥāra* whom they would have met daily on streets and sitting-areas of the neighbourhood<sup>24</sup>. Similar attitudes were held towards senior female members of the family who acted as educators of all age groups and organizers of family life in the extended family house as discussed in chapter eight. The separation between age groups in modern cities have resulted in major social and psychological problems that were not experienced traditionally<sup>25</sup>. Amongst these are the loss of status of the elderly, severing the traditional process of transmitted knowledge from one generation to the other, the loss of moral and behaviour standards and the discontinuity of culture altogether.

---

<sup>24</sup> Amongst the main features of the traditional *ḥāra*, was the *ḥakāwātī* (story-teller). In the *ḥāra*, the past was not only learned for its own sake, but was also brought into the present on regular basis, and in a way that extends into the future. In his historical recounting, the past was linked to the present as the history of the people was updated, made continuous and unending stream, and taught anew to the assemblage of children, adults, and elderly members of the community.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Alexander stated that the separation between age-groups in modern cities have resulted in major illnesses amongst different age-groups (especially the young) such as the fear of death, retirement trauma, higher disease incidence and the like. See: Alexander, Christopher. "Major Changes in Environmental Form Required by Social and Psychological Demands." *Cities Fit to Live In*. Ed. Walter McQuade. New York: Macmillan Co., 1971. 53.

In addition, as conveyed by *mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, small children need each other in play under the supervision of all the adults of the *ḥāra* as the 'natural' way of growing-up. Even though this could be achieved in a public park (which today's cities do not always provide), that would not compensate for the experience of the "*normal [un-planned] daily meetings of 'aiyāl al ḥāra [children/youngsters of the neighbourhood]*."<sup>26</sup> According to *mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ, the development of children within the adult environment conforms to the proper establishment of a continuous home, where they mix with all genders and age groups who constitute the main sources of knowledge and experience based on that of the past. While today's children have better chances of proper education, they are thought to lack the basic ingredients of life and 'true' education.

### 11.1.2.3. A shift in the perception of self

As mentioned earlier, in this newly emerging mode of social organization, the traditional group was getting larger, hence less intimate and more anonymous. By the middle 1900s, the common Ḥedjāzī cultural conventions of the 18th and 19th centuries have either disappeared or lost their ability to communicate the people's place in the society. This social organization allowed individuals to break away from tradition, and to use the 'self' rather than the 'family' and 'community' as a reference. Hence, individualism became the dominant mode of social organization in any given neighbourhood. Today, the individual tends to be less attached to the community in which he was born and considered home for a period of time. He is now in position to make his own rules and present himself using the cultural-language that he sees fit (e.g., behavioural gestures, socio-economic status, and physical symbols). These bond-free individual cultures result in the production of houses that socially and architecturally 'speak' different languages, the codes of which need to be decoded on case-by-case basis. Naturally, they lack common denominators, hence comprehensiveness. Self-presentation and reflection of status are the substituting mode for family and community loyalty and conformity. To use Berger's terminology, this phenomenon could be referred to as a state of a "*homeless mind*" which is the result

---

<sup>26</sup> *Mu'allem* Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin, Jeddah, April 9, 1990.



of a transition in the status of 'self' versus society<sup>27</sup>. Berger sees the 'modern self' as autonomous, self-reflective and in search of a home<sup>28</sup>.

A chain-reaction effect follows this self-presentation process. Individuals - seeking membership in a particular group - seem to try to imitate or follow the steps of an already-established socio-economic group in order to be associated with it. Using others as a standard brings about a spread of certain 'styles' of domestic architecture that are clearly identified with particular groups (e.g., Roman villas for the wealthy). This group-conformity is somewhat reminiscent of the traditional mode of self-organization except that the latter was based on community values and norms as opposed to the former's reliance on imitation of 'styles' and forms regardless of common values or meanings. This is because of individuals' apparent tendency to seek conformity with others, yet trying to retain a certain sense of individuality which distinguishes them from others without being too different. The observable result today is the emergence of 'false' communities, "*a nation of strangers*"<sup>29</sup> - as compared with traditional standards - wherein individuals do not deeply relate to others as members with anything more in common than their relationship. Home in this case is the place where the best villas in the city are, along with the best groups (according to the individual definition of 'the best,' which is mainly based on socio-economic measures)<sup>30</sup>.

In modern Ḥedjāz, I believe there exist contrasts, tensions and conflicts between social groups (even of the same culture) in which members of one group seek to adjust themselves to the group believed to possess greater prestige and social

---

<sup>27</sup> See Berger, Peter, et al. The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness. New York: Vintage, 1973. 35-40.

<sup>28</sup> Incidentally, an element of similarity could be traced between *mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah's "home in one's head as the true home,"* and Berger's "*homeless mind*." This similarity is not in the placement of home as much as in the result of its absence. The security of the traditional "*home in the head*" that is discussed in chapters seven and eight fed from the overall security of one's membership in the family, community, the society as a whole, and the security of an almost guaranteed identity and self-representation. The modern "*home in the head*" is not secured, therefore, the 'head' become 'homeless.' As if *mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah* is trying to tell us that when 'home' comes out of one's head and its functions are carried outside the human body by another physical entity, it loses an essential part of its nature and its reason for being altogether, which leaves the mind without a home.

<sup>29</sup> Adopted from Packard, Vance. A Nation of Strangers. New York: McKay, 1972. *Passim*.

<sup>30</sup> See Riesman, David. The Lonely Crowd. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, 67-68.



prominence. Different social groups are in a relationship of inequality, whether or not this is openly asserted. Although there seems to exist a loosely organized cultural pattern for each of these groups, this pattern is not homogeneous and not free of contradiction especially at the individual's level. Furthermore, within the locality of one of these social groups, houses may be few meters away, yet they are utterly remote because members of the apparently coherent group are not socially motivated to become friends (not necessarily unfriendly). Hence, in this modern society even spatial proximity is not a guarantee for the emergence of a community in the traditional sense; where group membership was non discursive. It was not a problem for an individual in traditional Ḥedjāz to become a member of a certain community; if he were born in a given *ḥāra*, he automatically became a member of the community. Although membership in a traditional community was mainly defined through the accident of birth, it was not solely determined by it. This, however, is unlike modern communities in which memberships are mainly determined through choice.

The traditional Ḥedjāzī individual personalities developed gradually, it did not change time and again in form and content according to the fashion of the period like modern Ḥedjāzīs. Individuals found their rightful place within a well-ordered system by continuously reaffirming their thoughts, actions, and the environments they created for themselves. This reconfirmation of social identity, although was active, was largely unconscious as discussed in chapter eight. Never have societal changes been manifested in the rejection of the common beliefs in the need to break with tradition in favour of installing an entirely new way of living and thinking. This tradition had a normative character and its effectiveness was based on continuity and durability, while what distinguishes modern society is not continuity. Rather the radical change of human existence. The difference between the traditional self and the modern one is the emphasis of the traditional society on tradition as a 'continuity' of human existence, whereas modern society emphasized transformation as a 'fundamental change' of human existence. Change in itself is now taken as an improvement, irrespective of what is changing, and of the direction in which it is changing.

I believe that the modern home upheaval in Ḥedjāz lies in people's assumption that the self would not be appreciated for its own sake and that it needs material objects for a desirable representation to take place. This is the major contradiction

between the modern and the traditional societal attitude towards self-representation<sup>31</sup>: the self is an identity lacking meaning without something. This 'thing' in the past was inherent: the deeds of the self as its wealth versus today's 'thing' which is the material possessions of the self as the most comprehensive of signs, hence, the major source of meaning. The shift to the latter mode of social perception results in a shift of the whole social organization into socio-economic classes that must be materially identified. Once again the house appears to be the best 'tool' to achieve such a purpose. The main deviation from the traditional house to that of the modern is that this time it is going to materialize for more dubious purposes.

As argued in chapter eight, the traditional Ḥedjāzīs avoided competition that would have set them apart from their own group. However, when changes of the 1900s forced a rapid rather than voluntary and gradual change, when values central to the society were threatened, and when familiar and appropriate means of communication weakened, the obvious result was the community's concentration on a few key values which helped establishing a commonly presumed and desired social identity (i.e., socio-economic status). The retention of this traditionally-minor aspect of cultural-language assisted in the development of other less desirable mechanisms of non-verbal communication for the establishment of social identity. The house and other domestic objects become public emblems of social rank and identity, not only because of the varied capabilities of social classes to command houses in the market, but also because consumption and display become a significant element in the definition and differentiation of social groups within such a consumer society. When the house is designed and perceived as a showcase for others, dwellers or inhabitants choose to become mere 'things' living in a big showroom or simply reduced to owners of a commodity. If we perceive and treat ourselves as mere things, we can hardly expect to be 'at home.' Instead, we feel lost even if the house turns out to be materially comfortable.

At this stage, I feel obliged to remind the reader with the summary of the traditional Ḥedjāzī perception of the self, the group, the family and their status as presented by the elderly member of al-Makkī family (discussed in chapter eight):

---

<sup>31</sup> In a matter of fact, the traditional society of Ḥedjāz did not actively discourage any behaviour that could lead to individual inequality and materialistic self-representation, but was made socially unacceptable. Sharing of most resources was actively practised and socially encouraged.

...the original and genuine Ḥedjāzī family did not need to go through all this [showing-off], everybody knew them very well and we all knew how much they were worth from the size of their warehouses, shops and their merchandise at sea. They also were very modest about showing any difference between their houses and ours, although some of the younger ones did, but no one I knew was offended. Between us, the ordinary Ḥedjāzīs, if one of us started spending large sums of money on the façades of his house, people became offended, and he was condemned for trying to be different. It was as if belonging to us [not so rich] did not suit him, and he was immediately shunned by the *ḥāra*. Real men were judged by their accomplishments on behalf of others, their morality and ability to serve their community, not by how much wealth their trade brought them. You could have been the richest in Ḥedjāz and happened to be an arrogant type of man, isolating yourself from the community by showing your unwillingness to help others and mix with them. As such, people would know nothing about you, but that you were very rich and that all your money and your beautiful *sarāiyāh* [big-house] would not capture the heart of the youngest of our children. (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

#### 11.1.2.4. A shift in the perception of house, home and its range

As a result of the socio-cultural changes discussed above, it is natural that the built environment reflects a number of radical transformations. We saw how the disintegration of modern Ḥedjāzī communities, brought about by societal shift to more individualistic modes, led

members of neighbourhoods to be less socially motivated to form communities in the traditional sense. The extent of these distinct societal attitudes are all manifested in the overall layout of neighbourhoods and houses. For example, the culture of traditional Ḥedjāz encouraged shared public and private celebrations, the scale of the occasion would demand

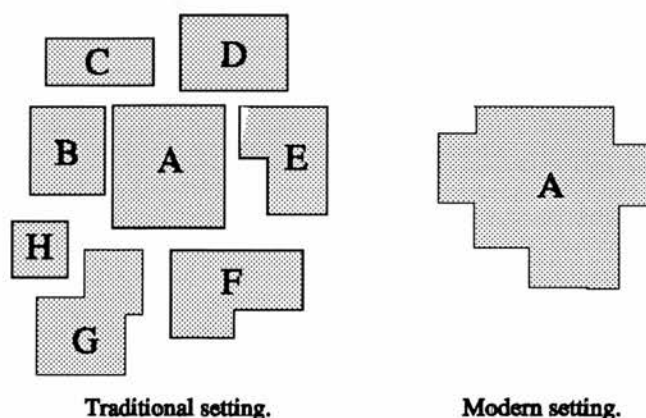
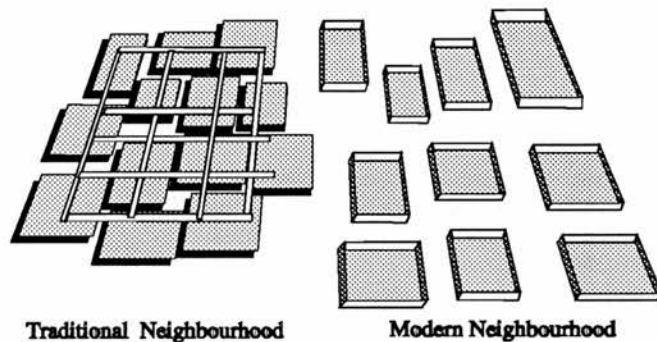


Fig. 11.5. Houses B, C, D, E, F, G and H served as one reception-area for house A in the traditional-setting, while in the modern case, house A has to provide its own reception-area within its walls.

large reception-areas (e.g., weddings). But because of the unique social attitudes of total homogeneity, common-purpose and shared values, this requirement was satisfied by all the houses in the neighbourhood (Fig. 11.5.). Houses functioned as one large reception unit, catering separately for many different activities that the total area of one house could not provide for. This eliminated the need to design and build houses with very large reception areas or at least a number of them within a single house, as is the case in modern Ḥedjāzī houses<sup>32</sup>. This homogeneity provided mutual support at times of need, stress and cultural change as well as at times of prosperity. Through the ability of community members to share symbols, food, festivals, rituals, religion, family, kinship and houses, environmental stresses and difficulties were greatly reduced, enhancing the community life beyond mere survival or mutual co-existence. Figure (11.6.) illustrates a simple contrast between the layout of traditional and modern neighbourhoods, both of which are the outcome of societal attitudes and conventions.



**Traditional Neighbourhood** **Modern Neighbourhood**  
Fig. 11.6. Houses in a traditional neighbourhood were socially connected to the physical environment as well as to rest of the community.

As discussed in chapter eight, *mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī's* statement, that he regarded all the houses in the *ḥāra* as his, is a manifestation of the perception of the traditional community of Ḥedjāz that gave strength to social relationships. The statement also suggests that membership in the traditional community was taken for granted and demonstrates how individual and group were related, resulting in the emergence of a sense of unity.

A quick glance at both a traditional and a modern house (Fig. 11.7.) might suggest that the modern house is more open to the community than the traditional one. However, on the neighbourhood level relationships between the house and its vicinity

<sup>32</sup> Traditionally, and even though available building materials and technology allowed for larger rooms, the concept of shared activities did not encourage both *mu'alleṃ* and clients to produce large reception-areas. In the example illustrated in figure (11.5.), houses B, C, D, E, F, G, and H served as a single reception-area for house A in the traditional setting, providing say a total area of 200 square meters. In the modern case, house A has to provide the largest possible reception area within its walls.

in traditional Ḥedjāz were strong and reciprocal unlike those of today. Lanes and streets adjacent to the house (Fig. 11.8.) represented both public and private zones simultaneously<sup>33</sup>. They were legitimized parts of the house, functioning as play grounds for the children (*aziqqah*), private

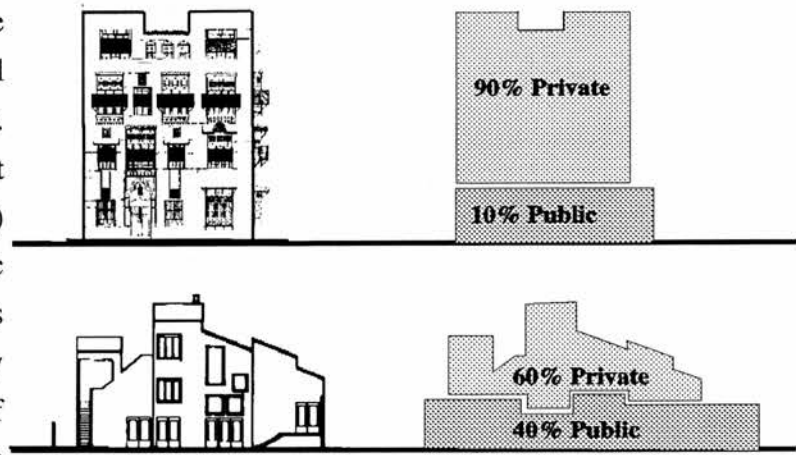


Fig. 11.7. The percentage of total private areas in respect to semi-private areas was larger in traditional houses than in those of today.

reception areas (*maṣṭabāt*)<sup>34</sup> for the men, and as public spaces for the neighbourhood functions (*barāḥāt*). The strength of these relationships, while enhancing other relationships between individuals and groups, also assisted in incorporating and transforming more places, hence widening the range of 'at-homeness' discussed in chapter eight. The relationship between the house and its vicinity was encouraged and supported by the physical layout of houses which were in direct contact with public thoroughfares. Activities that took place around the house were similar and supportive of those carried inside it, which allowed these areas to be physically and spiritually integrated with the structure of the house (out of a societal need to be in touch with the larger community of the *ḥāra*). The overlapping of public and private spaces between houses guaranteed their maintenances and defence, the result of which was socially and physically maintained, communally shared and sustained neighbourhoods. As discussed in chapter ten, this hierarchical order led the state to maintain the public space, the community to maintain the semi-public place, and the individual to maintain the private space. Contrasting this picture with today's neighbourhood-layout and social structure we find that the house stands alone, hardly supporting or being supported by adjacent streets, lanes or houses.

<sup>33</sup> Depending on the width of streets and lanes, semi-public areas in front of houses overlapped, and were shared (e.g., cul-de-sacs). Narrow lanes made the lane separating two houses a semi-public thoroughfare that only residents and close neighbours could use.

<sup>34</sup> Certainly there existed much more threshold articulation between the architectural domain of the house and the natural domain of the neighbourhood in the traditional setting. The *maṣṭabah* is one example of this threshold expression as discussed in chapters seven and eight.



Unlike modern neighbourhood layouts, which treats houses as enclosed and isolated spaces, the traditional neighbourhood managed to integrate the house with the surrounding environment. High-walled houses of today represent physical barriers that encourage the formation of more distinct individual cultures, while the traditional homogeneous and continuous development of houses in the *hāra* presented a unified character for the place. Again it could not be exactly determined whether this physical division of neighbourhoods supported the socio-cultural division seen above or the opposite is true. The result remains to be an absence of supportive relation between houses - that must work together if a neighbourhood is to emerge - and a lack of communal activities in the neighbourhood.

Modern houses, designed as individual units severed them from their environment, result in the formation of 'islands' separated by deep waters: close yet so far apart. It is well understood, however, that the modern layout of streets (e.g., grid-iron street network and multiple lanes) is also responsible for this loss of relationships between the house and the arteries of movement and activities. The result tends towards societal disintegration and social interaction in function of the number of acquaintances who can be reached in reasonable driving time. Today spatial proximity is added to the individualized cultures of the neighbourhood, making the emergence of a community in the traditional sense today an absolute luxury.

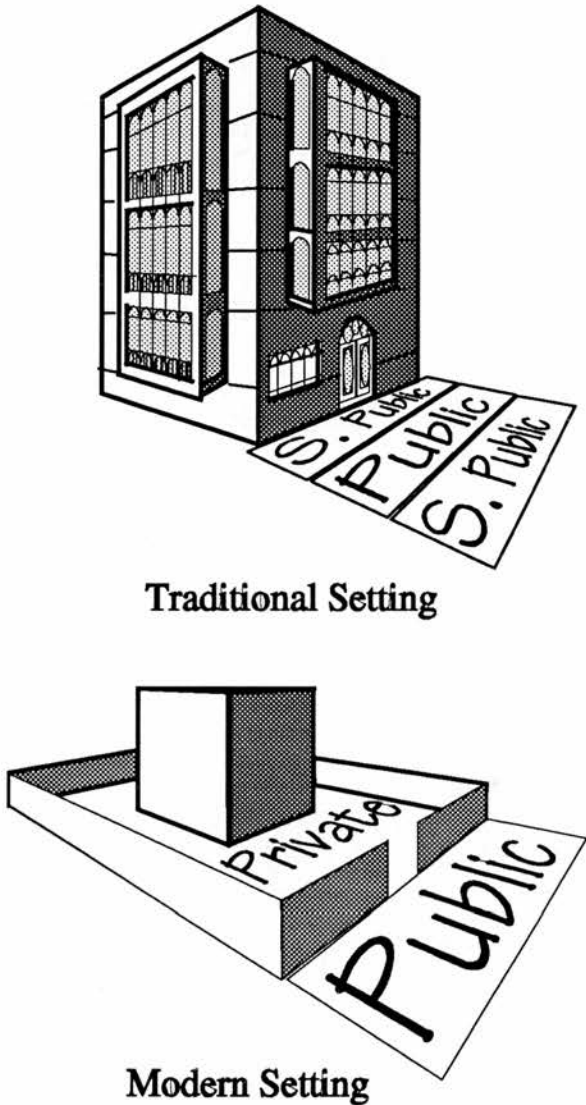


Fig. 11.8. Public areas in modern settings, because they are not embodied with the house and its occupants, are becoming 'no-man' zones.



If this picture is to be contrasted with that of *mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī's view of the traditional perception discussed above<sup>35</sup>, or that of the elderly member of al-Makkī family describing his home-range<sup>36</sup>, it is doubtful that these feelings of security, belonging and community would occur outside today's house-gates because of the weakness or absence of a meaningful relationship between these places, and between the house and the group, land and environment. While the traditional Ḥedjāzīes hold that the land is sacred bearer of life, and the tie between home and universe (including the human being), the modern Ḥedjāzīes think of land as a commodity. Total omission of such traditional spiritual homes makes the modern house the only recognizable personal domain in a given city. This, in turn, overloads the modern house and its immediate land (as private commodities) with further demarcations of territoriality, and personalization as discussed later in this chapter. So it seems that personalization is required when the community shifts to a physically-expressed territorial mode in the absence of symbolic and spiritual cultural space.

From the neighbourhood level, we come to that of the house where greater consequences are more visible. Let us begin with form, size and objects (e.g. furniture) of modern houses as they represent major concerns for today's architects and clients. The modern Ḥedjāzīes usually have a set of preconceived models or prototypes to represent a modern family house (e.g., Spanish Haciendas, British-colonial mansions). The design of particular houses thus involves the application of a set of preconceived 'images' as discussed in chapter twelve. The suitability of the house design to the resources and requirements of its ultimate residents depends on the suitability of the model imagined by the client, and the architect's own patterns of perception.

The distribution of oil-wealth and the changing structure of the economy also facilitated the 'material' presentation of individuals and groups. Houses and their furnishings are now commodities chosen and distributed through the market. The belief that material possessions - clearly manifested in domestic architecture - would

---

<sup>35</sup> "Every house in the town was mine, we were all one big family, if someone was happy, we were all happy, and if someone was sad, we were all sad, and in both cases we would be with him." *Mu'allem* Ṣaḍāqah 'Olaimī, Jeddah, March 29, 1990.

<sup>36</sup> "My house, the lane, the *ḥāra*, the mosque, the shop and the vegetable market; all these are my home, you can say my large home." Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990.

communicate more effectively, seems to be leading families and individuals of the newly emerging socio-economic classes to readily translate differences in economic resources into houses of different sizes, qualities, 'styles,' and locales. Today, houses are the major vehicle for the manifestation of success and social ranks, both



Fig. 11.9. A modern house in Jeddah. The house was completed at the beginning of 1989 when this 'style' was in vogue.

to self and others. Differences in personal disposable income are translated into differences in the patterns of display of group identity in interior and exterior decoration<sup>37</sup>. Unlike most developed countries, economic resources are not necessarily correlated with educational levels or social class in modern Ḥedjāz. The existence of foreign man-power, aggravated the situation in such a way that, for example, if a client had enough money but not adequate education or 'sophisticated taste' to join a certain class, he could always resort to his income which could afford him a 'specialist.'<sup>38</sup> The latter can translate the client's money into a symbol of higher social class. There are many examples of traditionally-simple families who live in 'Post-Modern villas' with Art-Deco interiors, in an attempt to cast off their traditional way of life. This is a case when a traditional Ḥedjāzī would have exclaimed: "*Jā yekaḥilhā 'amāhā* [lit. He wanted to paint her eyes with antimony, but he ruined them],"<sup>39</sup> which means that modern Ḥedjāzīs try to 'beautify' their self-images through the use of sophisticated architectural features, and they end up with ugly houses.

<sup>37</sup> Within fifty years after the beginning of the 1900s, the emphasis that modern Ḥedjāzīs put on houses changed from elaboration of house type, size and architectural features to the use of modern materials, the presence of furniture and appliances, and the removal of 'old-fashioned' features. Few years later, status was determined by the extent of family 'modernization': smaller, fully modernized houses became more valued than larger, non 'modernized' ones.

<sup>38</sup> The city of Jeddah, for example, was turned into an 'architecture playground' between the period of 1970 to 1980, when the number of foreign and local architectural firms exceeded the number of prospective houses.

<sup>39</sup> This traditional proverb is equivalent to "*a cow is never the whiter for washing itself often.*"

Hence, a major difference between a modern house and a traditional one - in terms of societal perception - is the difference between the pecuniary value and cultural value of the building. While the modern house is valued in terms of the money required to purchase the commodity, the traditional house is valued in terms of the cultural meanings attached to the house. However, as discussed in chapters eight and ten, home ownership was considered essential in traditional Ḥedjāz, it is still desired today as a source of self-esteem. So it is also possible that both periods attached pecuniary and cultural values to their houses, the difference still remains in the priority given to each value.

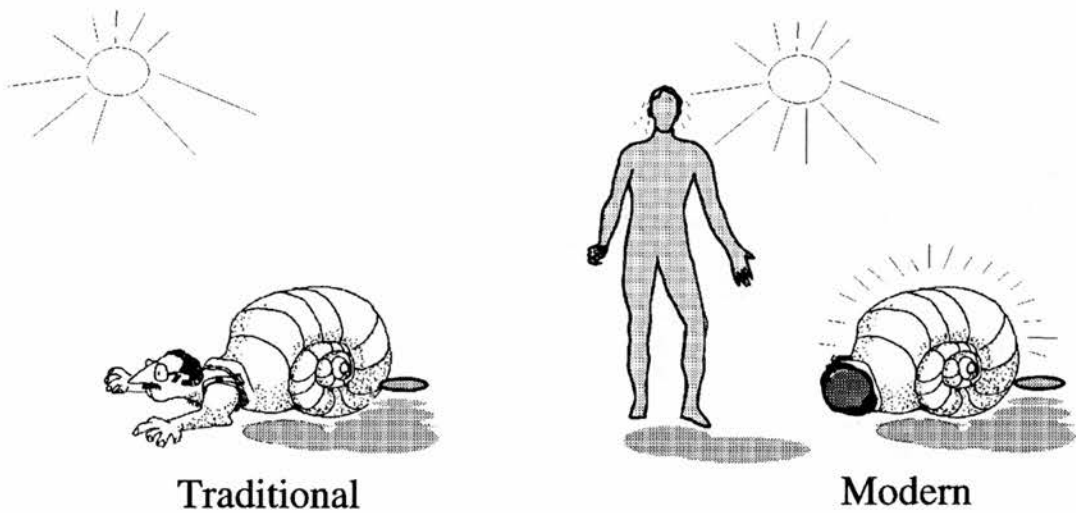


Fig. 11.10. The perception of home as a part of one's self: now and then.

People today put so much emphasis on the appearance of their homes to the extent of overshadowing the people inside it. On the basis of the argument by the elderly member of the 'Afif family, discussed in chapter eight, that in such extravagant houses, he only noticed the material elements of the house. They offended his sensibilities and so constricted his access to the spiritual heart of the place. His attention was then engaged by insignificant details of the structure. Likewise, the visitor of a modern house is bound only to see a massive structure and elaborate decorations because they are so overwhelming. The house is juxtaposed with the occupying family and its lifestyle. Thus, the power of the building to generate identity in this consumer culture is exaggerated by both architects and clients, giving priority

to the space over accommodation of the client's lifestyle. As Jager<sup>40</sup> puts it "...a great deal of recent architecture, including interior design, has often managed to perform admirably before the camera without much aid or comfort of inhabitants after the photographer have left."

Interiors of modern houses are consistent with this prevailing attitude, more for show than for use. The aim of producing 'show-cases' as opposed to 'homes' is to advertise social status. But status, according to Huges is a term of society which refers specifically to a system of relations between people<sup>41</sup>, the essential features of which is that the individual's identification should be based on his culture and not to appear different from it<sup>42</sup>.

Façades today play a major role in presenting the socio-economic status of the household to the rest of the community. But for friends and relatives, closer inspection of material goods requires their penetration into deeper areas of the house. This has resulted in a shift of the perception of the house as a private domain into a semi-private and even public domains so that

non-family members could be allowed into what was twenty years ago a totally prohibited area. Figure (11.11.) shows the plan of an actual house in one of the modern Ḥedjāzī cities compared with a traditional house from the same city. Note the visitors' route in the modern house and how it passes through the main features of the house: the swimming pool, the glazed family living-room, the glazed staircase, the fountain, the patio and gets right into the deepest point in the house.

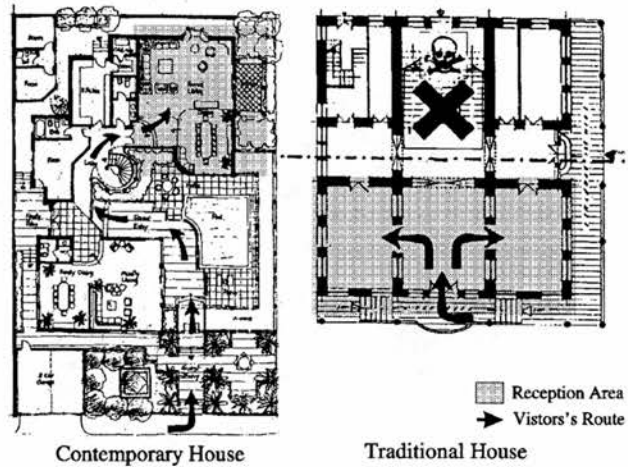


Fig. 11.11. Visitors in modern Ḥedjāz are allowed to the deepest points in the house.

<sup>40</sup> Jager, Bernd. "Body, House, City: The Interlinings of Embodiment, Inhabitation and Civilization." *Dwelling, Place and Environment*. Eds. Seamon, David and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. 221.

<sup>41</sup> Huges, Evertt C. *Social Change and Status Protest*. Phylon, 10 (1), 1949, 58-65.

<sup>42</sup> -----, *Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status*. American Journal of Sociology, 1949, 50: 353-359.

The traditional concept of everyday-use as a the main source of meaning-generation is also violated by the modern house. Elements, artifacts and other objects in the traditional house gained meaning through their use-value as discussed in chapters nine, ten and twelve. Today, a house, its objects and artifacts have economic and exchange values, besides the traditional values should there be any. Modern Ḥedjāzīs think less of older objects, which are replaced almost on an annual basis. While this deprives the house and its contents the possibility of continuity or association with the past (other than being an antique), it also denies the house itself a natural growth. The passage of time, that was essential for the home-making process, incorporating and transforming a place with its occupiers into a whole, allowed the traditional house and its objects to age with dwellers and gain value accordingly. In contrast, modern Ḥedjāzīs may leave their old homes because they seek freedom from the past and its memories (in most cases, this happens because of the attractions of the modern world more than because of flaws in the old world of dwelling).

We discussed in chapter ten that localized building materials were utilized to minimize capital cost and to channel problems of future maintenance into the spheres of construction skills already available in the community (along with available materials). The *mu'alleṃ* had relative freedom in choosing among different materials at each particular house and locality. The client's budget determined, to a great extent, the types of building material that were used. However, the use of certain expensive building materials was not unheard off (e.g., covering the whole façade with expensive imported wooden *mashrabiyyāt*). We also discussed in the same chapter that durability determined the expense of the material and its desired use. The main aim of both *mu'alleṃ* and clients was to enhance the sense of belonging to the context: "*stones and sand from under [one's] feet*."<sup>43</sup> (Fig.11.12.). Contrasting this attitude with the ideology of modern architects and clients, we find that today's mind has become more and more moved from contact with nature (allegedly for economic reasons). Traditionally, it was not enough to dwell in nature sentimentally and aesthetically, it was also essential to belong, utilize, maintain and respect nature. Today's society is detached from the rest of life and seldom sees it as part of nature.

---

<sup>43</sup> *Mu'alleṃ Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 7, 1990.



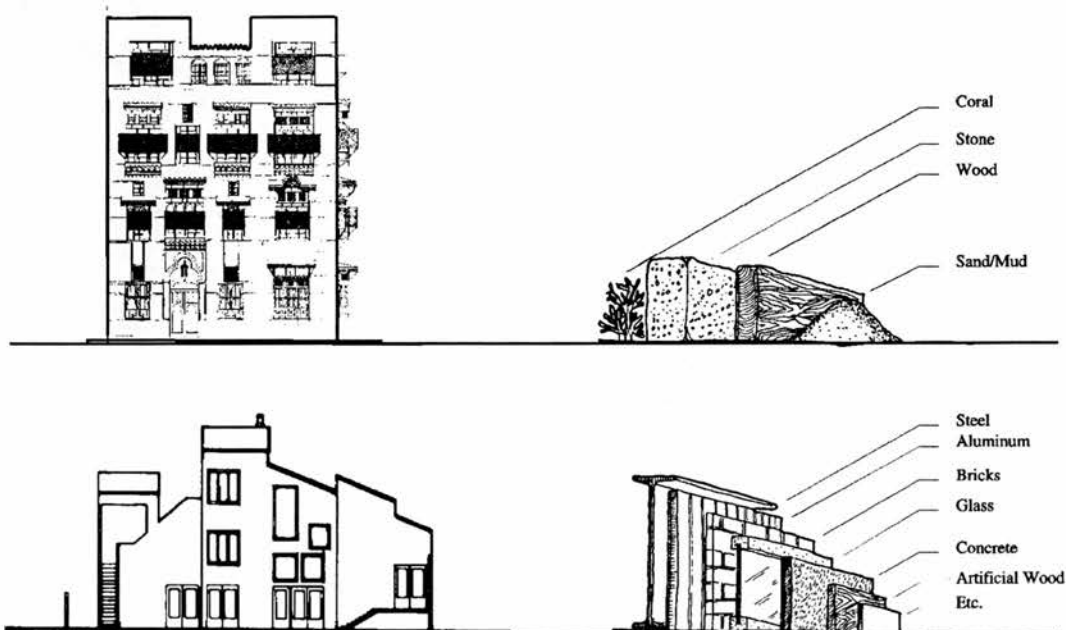


Fig. 11.12. "Stones and sand from under your feet..."

A further consequence of the modern ignorance of building materials is the deficiency of climatic consonance suffered by houses today. The emphasis here is not necessarily on building materials extracted from the same context as in the traditional sense, rather on appreciating the properties of traditional/natural building material as to heat transmission, absorption and reflection. The same could also be said about glare, acoustics, ventilation and so on. The modern dependency on artificial means of controlling the environment, like active (mechanical) ventilation systems, is a contradiction to the traditional concepts of self-sufficiency, permanence, continuity, coherence, and attachment, association with nature, all of which are essential for the emergence of the indigenous home. Today, people tend to look down upon the traditional baked clay-bricks of Al-Madinah, for example, as backward, and replace it by thin concrete structures which would be unlivable without constant air-conditioning and the extra padding of insulating materials. Once again, 'sophisticated taste' seems to lead people to forget that the thick, inexpensive structures of the past possessed an excellent quality of air-conditioning and insulation. Ignorance of the climate, or the overruling of climate-imposed rules on building could be understood in temporary commercial structures, however, these rules become more relevant when the building in question is a permanent dwelling.



#### 11.1.2.6. Shifts in the perception of the role of the designer and builder

One way of understanding the deficiency of modern architecture is to study the communication gap between the architect and his client. This could be achieved through an investigation of the level of cultural proximity between them. Proximity is an integral factor in determining and maintaining individual's membership in a cultural group. Therefore, a high 'cultural proximity' between the architect and his client affects the modes and efficiency of communication between them<sup>44</sup>. The social proximity of architect and client is of vital importance in their relationship as it determines the level of familiarity between their sub-cultures. It also determines the architect's achievement of a respectful membership in the sub-culture of his clients, which in turn would guarantee him 'inside knowledge' necessary to navigate social distance.

But why should the architect be socially distant from a client of the same culture? Why should he be any different to start with? Historically speaking, the place of the architect in society was not well defined before the modern era: he was indistinguishable from other members of the building craft, with ideals similar to those of his society *"until Alberti gave architecture a theory of its own and the architect came to be seen as someone special."*<sup>45</sup> Yet still he was seen as a mason, sculptor, contractor, artist and team coordinator. As discussed in chapters five and six, the traditional 'architects' of Ḥedjāz graduated from the ranks of the master-builders: those who took young assistants and trained them to help with the physically demanding tasks as apprentices. This system became the device for the transmission of the building tradition from generation to generation. The importance of this system could be fully appreciated if one followed the authenticity of the adherence of traditional builders to the prevailing socio-cultural norms of their time, throughout the past three hundred years of domestic architecture in Ḥedjāz. The traditional designer

---

<sup>44</sup> As opposed to 'spatial proximity' which is mainly concerned with the physical distance between two individuals, we need to be looking at the social and cultural proximity between the architect and his client. As used by Harman in 'The Modern Stranger', cultural proximity here refers to elements concerning communicative competence between the sub-culture of the architect and that of his client. See: Harman, Lesley D. The Modern Stranger: On Language and Membership. New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1956, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Kostof, Spiro, ed. The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, 65.

and builder was granted the title *mu'allemin* (master), an honorary title which he seems to share with today's architect, yet it did not mean that he was socially distinguished from other members of his craft or his society; it simply recognized his ability to build. Even amongst his building crew, there was no clear social differentiation between *garārī* (mason), *murawwidj* (assistant), and *fallātī* (apprentice). The three terms commonly used to designate *bannā'* or *ma'ammir* (builder), did not carry any explicit distinction except within the guild itself as ranks possessing certain authorities and bound by certain obligations.

In traditional Ḥedjāz, the designer of the house was the builder as well as the user. This is said in the sense that both were very similar in all aspects of lifestyles, world views and values. While traditional builders were always 'insiders' in respect to their position in the communities they built for, architects today are always 'outsiders' relative to the places and communities for which they design. Ways of understanding the insider's (residents') point of view and experience are crucial if architects are to foster appropriate and significant places in which other people may dwell. *Mu'allemin* of the Ḥedjāz had an advantage of being within the community for a very long time starting from the day they were young trainees. Figure (11.13.) shows the difference between the modern architect and the traditional *mu'allemin* in terms of the period of contact with the community.

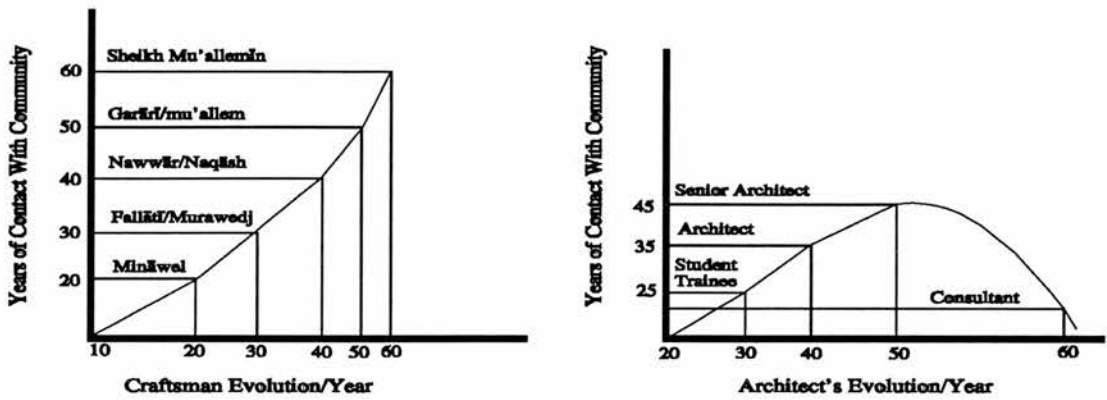


Fig. 11.13. Because the *mu'allemin* unconsciously referred to the values of his community, the communication problems that modern architects face were not apparent.

The *mu'allemin*, although respected as an individual, was no more than a servant to his society: he looked for no personal statement other than fine craftsmanship in his work. While there was space for his personal artistic talent, this was always practised within the cultural limits defined by his society as discussed in chapter ten. The

honour which the *mu'alle*m accrued was determined by his ability to finish the assigned job within a certain time, his respect to the culturally-accepted matrix, and the ability of his team to work with certain building materials<sup>46</sup>. This traditional format safeguarded the community from the imposition of egotistical designs and likewise allowed the *mu'alle*m to decode the client's rhetoric so as to avoid the communication problems endemic to today's pragmatic schools of thought. Because the *mu'alle*m unconsciously referred to the values of his community rather than a society - which was lived rather than learned - the communication problems which the modern architect faces were not apparent.

Instead of the homologous culture of the *mu'alle*m, the modern architect seems to belong to two cultures; his societal and his professional culture. He has compromised his societal culture - consciously or unconsciously - in order to deal with the values of his 'hidden' clients; his professional peers, public interest and the values of modern fashion. The ethics of the individual architect have been replaced by the ethics of the architectural office which, in turn, have become the ethics of the business world. In short, what was traditionally accepted as "*God's will*" is today delegated to the market forces and the 'spirit of the age.'<sup>47</sup> The skilled craftsman became a businessman and an entrepreneur<sup>48</sup>.

Architects today are hired to help define and express preconceived visual images. They became mediators between the client and the society as far as the advertisement of wealth, social status and different tastes are concerned, while, at the same time losing contact with both sides (client and society). The traditional house, its artifacts and its surrounding landscape more often arose from a direct wish and need; the result was a meaningful connection between artifacts and human world. In contrast, modern architecture is as dehumanized as the process of producing it. This presumably rational approach to architectural design allowed architects to organize and

---

<sup>46</sup> As discussed in chapter six, some building materials like stone excavated from the sea-bed (*hadjar bahari*) was very difficult to cut or shape. The handling of this material was time-consuming (three stones/day to cut and shape, four stones to lay-down/day).

<sup>47</sup> The motto of the movement of International Architecture.

<sup>48</sup> It often happens that a so called 'traditional' architect turned 'modern' overnight, and then again the other way round if it were found to be more profitable. This market-depended value judgement, when a sudden change occur in the architect's direction of thought for the mere sake of material profit, could only be termed the 'architecture of sheer opportunism.'

assemble buildings precisely and to manipulate their appearance logically without considering how architecture, as part of the physical and socio-cultural environments, is experienced - how it plays a role in the totality of human experience and understanding.

The 'willingness' of the architect to 'belong' to his client's sub-culture, whether temporarily or permanently, is a key factor in the communication process between them. Is the architect content to remain peripheral and culturally autonomous as far as his client's sub-culture is concerned? How far is the architect willing to go to achieve a membership? And what kind of a member does he wish to be? The answer to these questions will determine the efficiency of the communication between the client and the architect, hence the shared value system that is desired throughout the design process.

In the traditional design and building process, the *mu'allelem's* membership in the cultural group of his society was not a question of social motivation as it was a question of affording. The *mu'allelem* could not afford not to 'culturally' belong, for his survival as a craftsman depended on the approval of his society, and in most cases, he did not have other alternatives to choose from; he simply did not know any better ways of carrying out his work. To the *mu'allelem*, the cultural pattern of his client had the authority of a tested system of recipes because he partook in the vivid historical tradition by which his culture has been formed. Although the culture of his clients may have its peculiar history, this history was in most cases accessible to the *mu'allelem* through assimilation with his own home group. In contrast with the modern architect who, in dealing with his client, is involved in a certain cultural-group where his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be indigenous to it.

On the other hand, there is the client's willingness to accept the architect as a temporary member of his sub-culture. The extent to which the architect is welcomed and the place he is expected to occupy in the client's culture depend on his interactive role and his relationship with his clients, and his ability to motivate them to communicate their needs and feelings (likes, dislikes, egos) efficiently with him. The traditional shared view of life between craftsman and client allowed them to work

together and introduce individual variations into accepted house models, while still respecting their traditions. *"the client gives you budget and site and then depends on God. After I draw the plan of the ground floor on the sand with my stick, and specify a placing for the staircase, I leave the rest to God."*<sup>49</sup> Mutual trust was engendered between client and architect, not through elaborate investigations on the part of the *mu'alle*m, but by sharing a common culture.

In a typical rational design process today, the relative importance of the client is likely to shift as the production process gets under way. During the design phase, the client gives way to the architects; in the building permit phase he gives way to municipalities and local authorities; during the working-drawing phase to engineers and during the implementation phase to contractors. By the time the client receives his house, many agencies will have been involved, most of which knows nothing about the intended user. Obviously the client's observed, and sometime presumed, needs are largely responsible for this disruption of traditional architecture. And yet the pragmatism of the architects involved must also bear much of the responsibility. The intelligent participation of the client is apparently essential to the harmonious completion of the building. Yet such client contribution in modern Ḥedjāz, has produced exactly the opposite effect. Perhaps the dilemma is best summed up by Norberg-Schultz when he observes that *"the main reason for the architectural chaos of our time, therefore, is the architect and the client's lack of theoretical understanding. The client should know enough not to insist upon meaningless demands, while the architect as a specialist has to know the whole range of the problem."*<sup>50</sup>

## Summary

This chapter suggests that the study of the tradition that produced the Ḥedjāzī house may reveal more than just differences of societal attitudes towards the built environments. However, I faced here some great difficulties in my attempts to separate and individually analyze otherwise highly interrelated phenomena, difficulties

---

<sup>49</sup> *Mu'alle*m Aḥmad Ḥamah al-Rīfī, Al-Madinah, April 27, 1990.

<sup>50</sup> Norberg-Schultz, Christian. *Intentions in Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965, 14-17.

reminiscent of those discussed in chapter ten. However, the following are two attempts of compressing the information presented in this chapter. They both aim at providing a summary of my findings and their consequences on the built environment:

**Greater individualism means:**

- More competition
- More varied and alien house models;
- Greater attempt to communicate identity, since individual status is both more important and less clear;
- Changing perception of privacy leads to more separation from the outside and more differentiation internally.

**Changes of cultural-language from traditional attributes to modern ones means:**

- Individual meanings became more important than group meanings;
- Meanings are not shared within the group;
- Meanings are idiosyncratic;
- Status and identity become more important than reputation generated by one's deeds and other virtues in one's community;
- Built environments communicate fewer superficial meanings (e.g., status, wealth, profession) as opposed to traditional spiritual ones (e.g., religious, symbolic, cosmological);
- Environments communicate less effectively;
- Meanings and communication become more dependant on verbal language and explicit codes;
- Rules and conventions controlling and guiding behaviour become weak and the response to cues is less habitual and more questioned.

**Population increase means:**

- Societies are larger in scale and less homogeneous;
- Societies become divided into various components, having more variable lifestyles, values,...etc.;
- Less land, reduced mobility and changes in privacy-maintenance mechanisms;



**Separation of age groups - especially the elderly - means:**

- Changes in conflict-resolution mechanisms and deprive younger generations from learning about the past.
- Discontinuity of traditions and the loss of standards of norms, mores, values, habits, ...etc.;
- Changes in attributes of religiosity;
- Examples of past ancestors become less important, leading to loosening of tradition, hence discontinuity;

**Changing the role of house architecture means:**

- Architects are expected to design types of houses which their traditions did not address in the past.
- Changes and innovations are rapid and continuous, house models become obsolete very quickly, and novelty has high value. As a group, architects are quite different from users as a whole. In some cases architects are quite foreigners to users lifestyles and values.

The following table summarize the outcome of the contrast between the traditional and modern societies discussed in this chapter:

<b>SOCIETAL PERCEPTION</b>	<b>TRADITIONAL</b>	<b>Modern</b>
<b>Group membership</b>	Accidental. Identity pre-requisite. Low individual differences.	Chosen. Socio-economic status. High individual differences.
<b>Privacy</b>	Communal & well-maintained.	Contradicted. Leads to separation.
<b>Self-representation &amp; social identity</b>	Great attempts to establish clear identity based on deeds, mores, beliefs. Promotes belonging.	Unclear= great attempts to communicate identity based on socio-economic status. promotes distinction.
<b>Cultural-language</b>	Based on symbol. Implicit:non-verbal. Strong behaviour-guiding rules. Response to cues is habitual and taken for granted.	Based on signs. Explicit: verbal. Weak rules for controlling behaviour. Response to cues is less habitual & more questioned.
<b>Social organization</b>	Small Scale. Group-oriented. Homogeneous. Cooperative.	Larger scale. Self-oriented. Heterogeneous. Competitive.
<b>Spatial organization</b>	Non-specific, multi-use & flexible.	Specific, singular-use & dogmatic.
<b>Meaning organization</b>	Emerge from everyday use. Latent aspect of function. Embodies religious & Cosmological beliefs. Shared/Communal.	Emerge from economic value. Manifest aspect of function. Excludes spiritual aspects. Idiosyncratic.
<b>Building process</b>	Client involved/have much knowledge and influence on design/building process. Time is a priority.	Client not involved/have little knowledge about design/building process. Money is the priority.
<b>House</b>	Household utensil. Symbol of family-identity. Means and end simultaneously Based on necessity Spiritual value. Uniform house models. More effective & highly communicative.	A commodity. Symbol of self-identity & status. Means and end differentiated. Based on choice Pecuniary value. Variable models. Less effective, low communication
<b>Social transformation</b>	Gradual & adaptive	Abrupt & adoptive
<b>Choice</b>	Communal	Individual
<b>Family</b>	Extended, holistic & continuous Age-groups integrated.	Single & divided. Age-groups isolated.
<b>Self/Individual</b>	We are. Low variability. Reputation is more important.	I am. High Variability. Socio-economic status is more important.
<b>Architect/Bulder</b>	Integral member of community who is expected to conform to past traditions.	A distant expert who is expected to produce uncommon designs.
<b>Religion</b>	Effective as the main reference of life.	Different part of life
<b>Neighbourhood</b>	Home. Shared community domain.	A chosen locality. State domain.
<b>Street</b>	Home/semi-public part of the house Domain of community interaction.	Service circulation/Parking. State domain.
<b>Architecture</b>	The art of living	The art of building
<b>Building material</b>	Natural/local/contextual	Man-made/international
<b>Change</b>	Continuous tradition:to improve. Temporal, slow & cohesive.	Transient: High value for novelty, rapid & Inconsistent

Table 11.T1. A contrast between traditional and modern socio-cultural attitudes.

## Comment

The decline of the traditional Ḥedjāzī culture was mainly due to three factors; the first of these is the weakened morality that resulted in a general decline of the individual members of the society. Secondly, the weakened common spirit that resulted in the decline of social order. Finally, a rush towards the Western Culture that resulted in an over-influencing cultural imitation and acculturation. This, in turn caused the evolution of a new cultural pattern that led the traditional fundamental principles to become gradually reinstated in the general course of things.

It could also be argued that one of the main causes of the cultural decline of Ḥedjāz was the spread of oil-wealth amongst members of the society. While this, alone, could not be responsible for the change of the traditional, tightly-knit communities - based on survival value as a key to the drive to communal integration and organization - its indirect effects could be blamed (e.g., independence of individuals). Once the co-ordination and efficiency of the society as whole was disturbed by individualized tendencies and intentional attempts to disintegrate, the societal shifts discussed above became obvious.

However, the key issue is not whether or not the modern Ḥedjāzī society was more materialistic or wealth-conscious than the traditional one. The issues are those of integration, organization and unity. The traditional trend to integration conferred powerful advantages upon the society. By virtue of its greater adaptability competence and experience resulting from the close-knit formation of its members, the traditional Ḥedjāzī society was able to absorb years of acculturation and integrate foreign cultures into one distinctive culture. No matter what the individual traditional Ḥedjāzī thought, or how he lived and behaved, the outcome throughout the past three hundred years was a 'whole society,' conforming to communal norms, and abiding by collective values and rules, producing a unified architecture, based on a unified culture. For while this trend to integration and consolidation conferred upon the society some of the qualities of a separate individual, the sphere of individuality of its component parts were sharply circumscribed. So it is this total competence within the whole society, dependent upon the specialized aptitudes of its members but quite apart from their individual overall competencies, that was critical for the survival of the traditional Ḥedjāzī culture.

To understand the difference between the traditional house and the modern one, an understanding of the kinds of meaning that emerge in person-world relationship is a prerequisite. The key to such understanding lies in the distinction between the use-based meaning of *living* and the image-based meaning of *showing*, to build so that *we all can live together* as opposed to *build to show them where I live*. In traditional Ḥedjāz, house and neighbourhood were one. The house and its parts were linked to many other settings in the neighbourhood, the town and beyond. However, as discussed in this chapter and the one before, this cultural landscape can be analyzed and studied but it cannot be divided into components. The house in traditional Ḥedjāz provided the living environment, while the society provided the symbols and the devices by which these symbols were communicated and understood<sup>51</sup>. The result is a total harmony between the variables of space and meaning within time. These were more uniform and coinciding in the traditional Ḥedjāzī society than in the modern one. Traditional notions of gradual growth, everyday use and the multi-functional nature of the house has been almost discarded in the modern Ḥedjāzī house. These, not only gave meaning to the architecture of the house, they signified movement that is the essence of life. The simple fact that the room functions in traditional houses could be moulded and adapted to different needs supported the possibility of continuous local adaptation that is hard to achieve in present houses. Modern houses cannot be modified as much as we desire.

The socio-cultural virtues of the past or the market dependent values of today, will both produce houses, but only the former was able to produce homes in the traditional sense of the word: Homes as living processes rather than formalistic shells for living, they can not be merely designed and built. They could be initiated and then left to mature while we encouraged them to grow in the desired direction. To the modern Ḥedjāzīes, a house could be called home, the sacred, life, ...etc., just like those of traditional Ḥedjāz. It is also possible that the modern house could perform all the tasks required from it, including the generation of home and other meanings in a greater capacity, with more efficiency and more physical comfort than that of its traditional counterpart. The problem, however, lies in the lack of unity suffered by the

---

<sup>51</sup> One has to admit that modern Ḥedjāzī houses and domestic objects are not bad communicators. They provide a non-verbal language for the differentiation, integration and presentation of group identities, for both fundamental social status (class, age, and gender included) and smaller social worlds. They are used to express, cultivate and preserve more private meanings critical to personal identities. They are however, the medium of highly individualized self-expression.

modern house and its range. It could be a home, yes, but it is a home that ceases to be so right outside the gates of the house. It is then a bounded home that is far removed from what the traditional Ḥedjāzīs achieved.

The traditional Ḥedjāzī environment should not necessarily be treated as 'old' or 'backward.' It should not be always conceived as a negative concept without further investigations and perhaps contrast with the so-called 'modern' or 'progressive.' Many architects and clients today may admire the traditional architecture of the region while rejecting the traditional culture that produced them. In this chapter I have tried to show that architecture comes in a single package that can not be separated. Not only that, but the virtues and principles of traditional architecture are far superior to those of today. The attributes of this tradition are related to the general concept of the built environment and, therefore, the opposite of the above statement should be true: one should admire the tradition that produced this architecture and the rest would follow naturally.

For the modern Ḥedjāzī society to have a valid culture it must have a valid tradition. The latter is achieved through continuity and consistency of cultural transmission over time. This should include consistency in lifestyle, behaviours, social institutions, art, architecture, cultural landscape, beliefs, events, places, images, values among others. 'Traditional' implies belonging to a group and to the land. The traditional built environments of Ḥedjāz were identified by regions, while the modern ones are identified - like other architectural movements - by periods. The latter can not produce continuity, belonging to places, people, and their culture.

Traditional houses are treasure houses of human experience; of successes and failures, and of ways in which built environments have interacted with the culture and environment of given localities. Time has changed, but it is still worthwhile to preserve the living qualities of the traditional habitat. Not in the physical sense of preservation as much as the use of these qualities as a continuous source of inspiration and as an alternative to a world-wide modernism. It is possible that the social cost could be minimized since there would be much less displacement from the original culture.

CHAPTER TWELVE

AUTHENTICITY, IMITATION  
AND INNOVATION



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### AUTHENTICITY, INNOVATION AND IMITATION

---

#### Introduction

If people in traditional Hedjāz - like those of other traditional cultures - did certain things in certain ways for a very long time, they had cherished reasons for doing so. Accordingly, the dynamic impulse was tempered with subtlety and sympathy with tradition which allowed new ideas to be introduced in their due time and in circumstances which were appropriate. In this way the processes of change were themselves a part of everyday life and as such resulted in the production of houses which were indeed authentic<sup>1</sup>. This chapter examines the quality and sources of this authenticity and corresponding questions of innovation and imitation. In doing so, a contrast is drawn between the traditional architectural language of Hedjāz and that of the modern one. Reflections on this may suggest ways of profiting from the art and architecture of the past rather than resorting to directly imitative styles of one kind or another and without the fatuous replication of traditional forms, both of which are almost endemic today.

While acknowledging a certain danger of distortion in contrasting a building tradition which has been analyzed and supported by primary evidence (i.e., through the interviews), with assessments of a present societal and architectural situation that are based only on personal experience as a native of the region, I do know, as a fact, that the views expressed in this chapter are by no means merely those of a few individuals. I do hope that future researches might gain from the general ideas presented here for more detailed investigation, based on empirical data and fieldwork about the present situation.

---

<sup>1</sup> The word 'authentic' according to the Webster's Third New International Dictionary means: Worthy of acceptance, not copied, properly qualified, not imaginary or specious, genuine, original, of an origin that cannot be questioned, marked by conformity to wide spread or long-continued tradition, valid norms. "*Authentic stresses fidelity to actuality and fact, compatibility with a certain source or origin, accordance with usage or tradition, or complete sincerity without feigning or hypocrisy.*" See Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 3 vols. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1981. 1:146.

### 12.1. Authenticity, innovation and imitation

Why is it that the appearance of today's Ḥedjāzī houses does not reflect the various functions for which they were designed? Where is the spirit of the society? Why cannot these houses transmit at least some of the best of today's imagination? As we see in chapter eleven, there were a number of socio-cultural reasons for such failure, and despite the fact that the specification for many of these houses must have stipulated that they should be built for a Ḥedjāzī culture and environment, the final products were direct imitations of non-indigenous models.

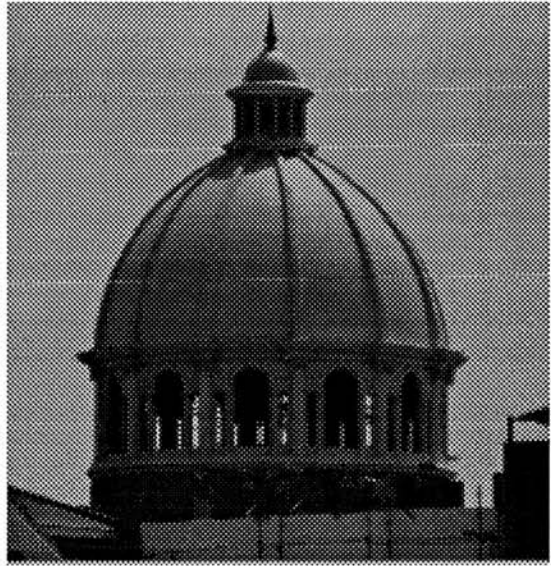


Fig. 12.1. Capital Hill/USA or Jeddah/Saudi Arabia?

One can understand the reasons behind this state of architectural confusion, as the architects of today's houses must have asked themselves: "*which Ḥedjāzī culture are we designing for?*" The major shifts of the various aspects of this society have made it an ambiguous environment, where a distinguishing social and physical identity is hard, if not impossible, to perceive. The modern house and the image associated with it - that of technology and progress - has communicated only alienation. The architectural language of these houses is not comprehensible any more, and when they do communicate, they do not reflect their Ḥedjāzī context. Moreover, the trends towards individualism in society, discussed in chapter eleven, and the absence of a unifying culture, have led people in the region to produce an architectural language which is more personalised.

Modern Ḥedjāzī houses can be seen as stemming from two main models: the 'modern' model which is formed after international styles and is mainly Western in its plan configuration, elevational treatment, etc; and the 'traditionalized' one, which is a representation of both national (e.g., Ḥedjāzī, Southern Arabian) and international traditional models (e.g., Spanish, North African, British Colonial). In most cases, the

latter type combines the traditions of many regions and brings them together in an eclectic assembly. Between these two house models falls a range of minor ones, like replicas of traditional Middle Eastern (e.g., Cairene), Classical European (e.g., Palladian villas), or Oriental (e.g., Japanese, Chinese) house models. In these models the same building material, colours and architectural vocabularies are sometimes copied to the last detail, but in general these are left to the whims of the owner and his architect. In all cases, modern or 'traditionalized,' the aim of the client and his architect is not to produce culturally-responsive family houses but, usually, to make a family statement of sophisticated taste, socio-economic status, educational achievement and so on.

The following photographs (Fig. 12.2a, b, c, d, e and f) show houses of those of different socio-economic strata of the *Jeddawī* society<sup>2</sup>. They are representatives of the kind of nonsense that is born when architecture on the drawing board (whether designed locally or abroad) loses contact with cultural reality. The absurdity of these façades and architectural features is most likely matched by internal spatial arrangements that are not in the least Ḥedjāzī or even Arabian.

---

<sup>2</sup> These are examples of houses built by both medium and high income social groups. While the income level seems to effect the scale of the house, it does not however determine its 'style,' elevational treatment and spatial configuration.



Fig. 12.2a. Copying from classical orders that do not derive from the traditional H̥edjāzī setting.



Fig. 12.2b. The traditions of many regions are brought together in an eclectic assembly.

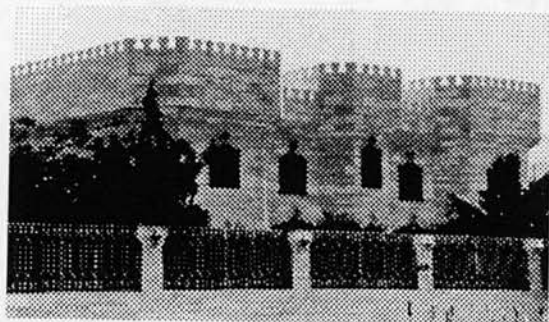


Fig. 12.2c.

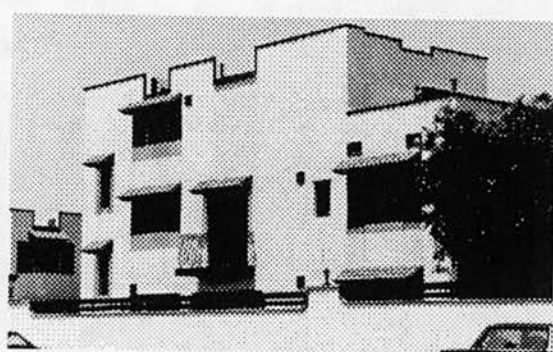


Fig. 12.2d.

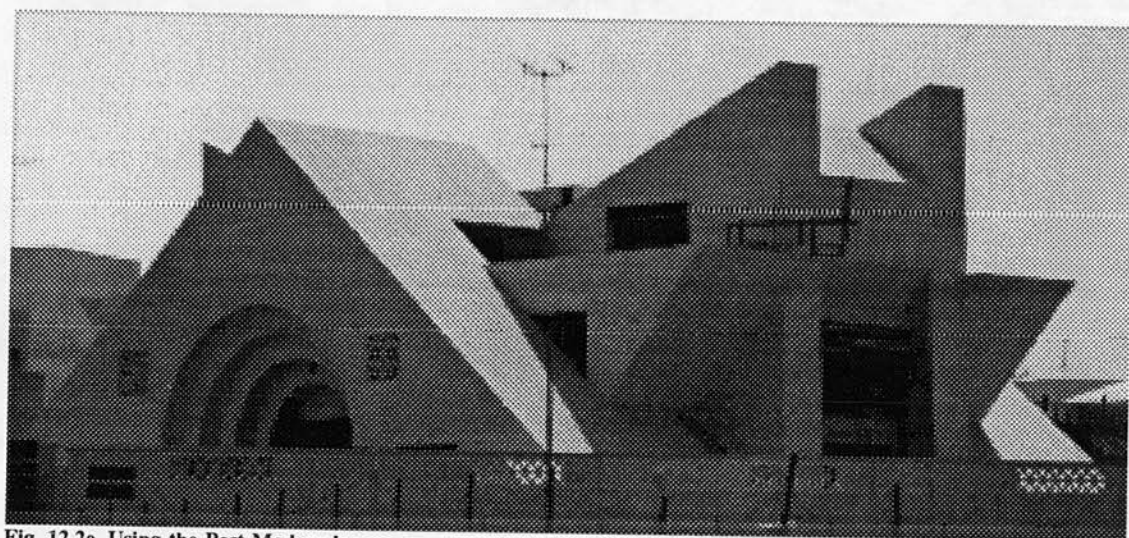


Fig. 12.2e. Using the Post-Modern language.



While these examples of architectural disorder support the argument presented in chapter eleven - of the absence of a unifying Ḥedjāzī culture - they also point to a kind of architecture that stems from the actions of uncoordinated forces of change. In the modern Ḥedjāzī society, various socio-cultural forces are pressing in different directions and are unable to come to a



Fig. 12.2f.

working agreement. Houses produced within this context point also to an architect - and a client - who has left various ideas or themes in a state of raw agglomeration. Under the current cultural conditions, in which the society operates as a collection of individuals who strive to compete with one another rather than cooperating in their affairs, the sure sense of authentic forms, unimpaired in the traditional house models, ceases to operate. Uniform building standards and measurements, mindless imitation and piecemeal production all tend to replace the traditional intuitive sense of what goes well together.

If we look at the domestic architecture in Ḥedjāz today, we will see that the main common denominators are what Lucien<sup>3</sup> describes separately as copying and imitation. Thus: 1)- Imitation is based on the critical, selective and inventive process of a living tradition whereas the copy is concerned with the mechanical and literal replication of originals; 2)- Imitation is the reconstruction of an original whereas a copy is merely a reproduction of a precedent; 3)- Imitation addresses both essence and form, whereas a copy is interested only in appearance.

Lucien therefore presents imitation, so defined as at least architecturally valid even if not the best way to gain from the knowledge and experience of past traditions. I, however, would prefer to treat this understanding of imitation as a meeting point for the sake of discussion between advocates of authenticity like myself and advocates of modernity and change. We shall refer to the principles and work of the traditional Ḥedjāzī *mu'allemin* who have already shown us how to deal with architectural

---

<sup>3</sup> Steil, Lucien. "On Imitation." *Imitation and Innovation in Architectural Design*. Ed. Lucien Steil. New York: Academy Editions, St.Martin's Press, 1988. 9.

vocabularies based on features and elements that were borrowed from other localities, and how to manipulate these forms through time to make them suitable for a unique Hedjāzī lifestyle and purpose.

I shall try to answer some of the major questions which I think constitute the heart of the problem of architectural authenticity: how does one determine what is authentic and what is not?; at what point is authenticity a genuine quality that may be replicated?; how can we transmit the character of 'authentic' houses to make societies and cultures aware of their meanings and significance? While these questions will find some answers in this chapter, I am afraid that the question as a whole of continuing traditional authenticity in Hedjāz is a modern dilemma and would require a lengthier and more detailed research than this one can afford. One thing may be said however: the main obstacle to achieving this relates to what is discussed in chapter eleven, that the society must 'want' to be culturally-authentic before its domestic architecture could reflect people's intentions and actions. To that extent, it is a problem of practice rather than one of research.

#### **12.1.1. When does a building become an authentic work of architecture?**

We say architectural authenticity is a modern dilemma because only today do technological, economic and social structures exist, which sever the link between finished products and the processes that produce them. Historically, as discussed in previous chapters, the designer of a house was the builder, who was intimately familiar with the culture of his clients. Continuity between form and process, surface and depth, perception and action were more readily maintained, resulting in a coherency of home place, form and function, being and meaning.

As we see earlier, and according to its very definition, authenticity cannot be achieved merely through the manipulation of form. If we use the traditional domestic architecture of Hedjāz as a standard, authenticity should be perceived in terms of process and relationships. As a process, authenticity is an expression in characteristic form of the contemporaneous indigenous qualities on which it is based. As a relationship, authenticity emphasises the strength of connection between people and the world they live in. This is why authentic meaning cannot be created through copying or imitating traditional form, since authenticity is the very source from which



form gains meaning<sup>4</sup>. Imitation of an authentic form is an unauthentic transformation and growth of that form, as Portoghesi notes "*Once this type of beauty [architecture without architects], created by time and by the sediment left from generation to generation, had been discovered and celebrated in the literature, one tried naively to capture it and to replicate it in the laboratory by vaguely imitating its form without understanding that a form born from a process cannot be retrieved without the process sustaining it.*"<sup>5</sup>

As we learned from the traditional *mu'allemin*, a building becomes a unique and authentic work of architecture (*shugul aştî*) when it expresses the creativity of its makers as well as the ambitions and achievements of the whole society (which seems like a proper definition of the traditional Hêdjâzî house). However, we need to deal with a number of very important questions, such as how to determine what is authentic or not among the various aspects of the traditional domestic architecture in Hêdjâz, and at what point in time such examples cease to retain authenticity, and so lose their legitimacy for replication?

To begin with, I believe that one can determine the authenticity of a house by whether or not it is born *within* the context in which it exists, like those of traditional Hêdjâz. A house must grow in its context, be culturally intrinsic. We see in chapters three, six, seven, eight, and ten that the process of creating a spiritual home in traditional Hêdjâz, and the formative process of creating a culturally-authentic house emerged out of the everyday life and context of that place. Forms, shapes, values and people developed through this process which involved a connection between the form of the phenomenon and the process that produced it as mentioned earlier. This connection evolving between past and present, purpose and achievement, process and product was, traditionally, the major source of authenticity. To further explain this point, I present these examples of the traditional criteria of authenticity: everyday use, unity, and adherence to religion, all of which are discussed in chapter ten.

---

<sup>4</sup> Definitions adopted from Dovey. See: Dovey, Kimberly. "The Quest for Authenticity and replication of Environmental Meaning." *Dwelling, Place and Environment*. Ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. 33-50.

<sup>5</sup> Portoghesi, Paolo. *Le Inibizioni Della'Architettura Moderna*. Rome, 1974. 134. Cited in Rudolf, Arnheim. *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. 170. (Words between brackets are added).

### 12.1.1.1. Authenticity through everyday use

As we see in chapters eight and ten, the pattern of everyday use in the traditional Hedjāzī house was one which reflected and strengthened a sympathetic interaction between people and their home environments. As applied in this sense, everyday use reinforced the close bonds between the spiritual inhabitants of the house and the physical habitation; between the snail and the shell. The traditional Hedjāzī built to establish his place in the universe, to express his feelings, intentions, inspiration, and actions. His buildings, in turn, received these meanings from his use of them. The value of any feature or artefact in the house depended on the needs that were satisfied by it.

To illustrate the significance of everyday use as a validation of authenticity of forms and how modern architects forget this precondition, we can examine a traditional architectural component that is copied extensively in today's Hedjāzī houses: the *rowshān* (Fig. 12.3). According to Dovey<sup>6</sup>, who examined the transformation of a similar element - wooden shutters - there are two kinds of transformation of form: one that occurs with the loss of use and integration with everyday life; the other occurs when function is abandoned. These were both considered by the *mu'allemin* as essential to the house in traditional Hedjāz, as we see in chapters eight and ten. We also see in chapters three, six and eight that the original *rowshān* served as a boundary control device and for the regulation of temperature, ventilation and light to provide a view, and for entertaining other functions. In its original context, the *rowshān* was integrated with the everyday life of the house as an essential component.

The traditional form of the *rowshān* evolved within this context of boundary control. Technology has provided modern Hedjāzīs with other means of control that perform some of the original functions of the *rowshān* (e.g., one-way glass). Towards the middle 1900s, the *rowshān* was cut off from its functional roots. For sometime, the *rowshān* was built to decorate<sup>7</sup>, but not actually to be used. Its connection with

---

<sup>6</sup> Dovey, 1985. *Passim*.

<sup>7</sup> We may argue that the use of a *rowshān* as a decorative element of certain aesthetic values is in itself a function of that *rowshān*. However, the function meant here is the original one: that of providing privacy, regulating ventilation,...etc.

life inside the house was severed and its role became purely visual and static. From the authentic traditional point of view, this kind of *rawāshīn* is unusable and purely decorative.

Perhaps the final affirmation of redundancy lies in the imitated version of the *rowshān* on the façade of a modern house (fig. 12.4.). This represents a complete transformation of the relationship between the user and the form and signals the loss of integration between the *rowshān* and everyday life in the modern house. At the same time, there is a transformation of the formative process: whereas the traditional form of the *rowshān* derived from activities of everyday life, the decorative form derives from the visual image of 'rowshān.' As the replicated *rowshān* becomes less and less like the original

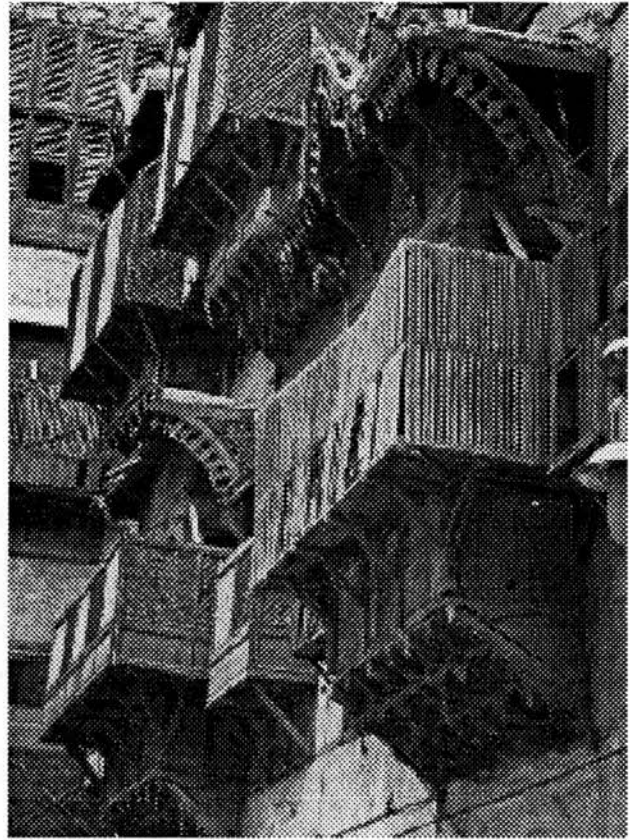


Fig 12.3. The form of the original *rowshān*

version, chances are its meanings too will be forgotten in the course of time<sup>8</sup>.

Similarly, traditional house forms and space arrangement reflected the way of life of the people for whom these forms were intended, as we see throughout this research. But the plans of houses built for and by members of the traditional *ḥārāt* of Ḥedjāz, did much more than reflect a single set of domestic functions. We see in previous chapters that traditional functions did not vary according to wealth and social status of the inhabitants; they communally varied over time and were modified by the generally improving standards of living in each period. Today, such functions vary

---

<sup>8</sup> However, if the imitated *rowshān* of the 1980s does not convey its original function, it might, thought modern architects, achieve its meaning through imitation - or rather deception (in this case, the authenticity or non-authenticity of the *rowshān* depends on whether one sees it as a formal or as a usable object).

according to the fashion or the changing conventions of domestic behaviour, as we see in chapter eleven. The ever-changing fashions of today are perhaps the modern determinants of house plans and forms, while the traditional house established a richer pattern of **being** and **dwelling** rather than one which was a result of mere whimsy.

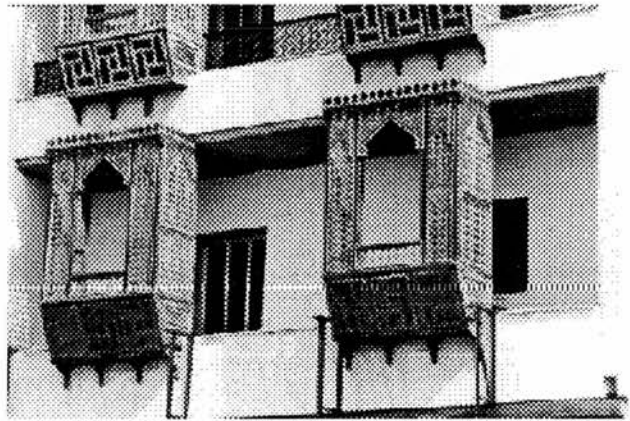


Fig. 12.4. Imitation of a *rowshān* on a façade of a modern house.

Genuine needs and functions are major requirements of authenticity. But we see in previous chapters how the traditional view of everyday use did not relate only to the functions of the house. Function as such was not the sole determinant of house form or its space organization, because family life, social setting, behavioural patterns, security, structure and availability of building materials were also important, as we see in chapter ten. This means that the traditional 'function' must be used in its widest sense, that is 'the fulfilment of intentions,' the most important of which were spiritual. As discussed later in this chapter, such intangible features added 'personality' to the ingredients of traditional authenticity, expressing function in the whole design of the house, in its structure, building materials, forms, layout,...etc. For example, it was not the function of the *rowshān* alone that made it authentic, for its shape, structure, and placement in the overall configuration of the house gave a character to that house and vice versa.

It may be argued<sup>9</sup> that 'form follows function' essentially means "*clearly organized, cheap and light*," and that form follows what interests man at a particular time. While I agree to some extent with the second part of the statement, I think that form may not exactly follow function, but it has to accommodate basic functional requirements: the reason for its *being* in the first place. Note how this is opposed to the modern search for socially attractive forms, 'styles,' and images where functions and needs often have a lower priority than 'wants.' Modern Ḥedjāzīes who seek distinctive 'styles' borrowed from a repertoire of local and foreign traditions just to

<sup>9</sup> As in Pye, David. The Nature of Design. London: Design Vesta, 1964. 9.

indicate social status, are prepared to sacrifice much more functionality and comfort than traditional Ḥedjāzīs were willing to do. As we see in chapter eleven, 'distinction seekers' also contribute to the extension of non-functional styles to every social level in the major cities of Ḥedjāz today (including the most conservative like Al-Madinah and Makkah).

Advances in technology have greatly expanded the 'vocabulary' available for visual display today, but have rendered its meanings unclear, while the traditional normative attitudes clearly specified what the house architecture was and what it was not. We could look at all the elements and components of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house that are replicated today for their own sake and judge for ourselves. The simply-applied decorations of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house - both internal and external - sprang directly from construction methods, practical requirements, religious and socio-cultural considerations, and on no small way from the psychology of the people and the spirit of the time. There were, however, features of traditional buildings that originated to satisfy a structural or practical function but which, after their usefulness had ceased, remained as decorative elements of the traditional Ḥedjāzī architectural vocabulary (e.g., the trefoil Moroccan arch - *'aqd mutallat* - of the entrance). These contrast with modern decorations that are merely structural appendages to indicate affluence (e.g., marbles slabs). The floral motifs and paintings on a traditional Ḥedjāzī house, that are considered today as 'unprogressive taste' belonged intimately to the house proper and could not be separated from the rest of the house without affecting its whole character.

To answer the second part of the question - at what point is authenticity a genuine quality that is worth replicating - we might look at one example of a recent attempt to imitate traditional or 'familiar architecture' based on a modern habitation programme. This is the residential compound of one of the oldest and most prominent families of Ḥedjāz (Fig. 12.5a & b.). This is the closest one can come to a traditional house if one chooses to overlook the source of that tradition. Architect Hassan Fathy was commissioned to design three 'traditional' villas for the family. The problem with the work of the great architect is not whether or not his villas look 'traditional,' but rather one of to which tradition they belong. They are a mix of a 19th century Ḥedjāzī house model and an 18th century Egyptian one. The Ḥedjāzī part of the house was the authentic traditional building material (*ḥadjar manqabī*), but the features of each house



were recreations of Egyptian traditions, most of which did not have any association with or resonance to the culture of Ḥedjāz<sup>10</sup>.

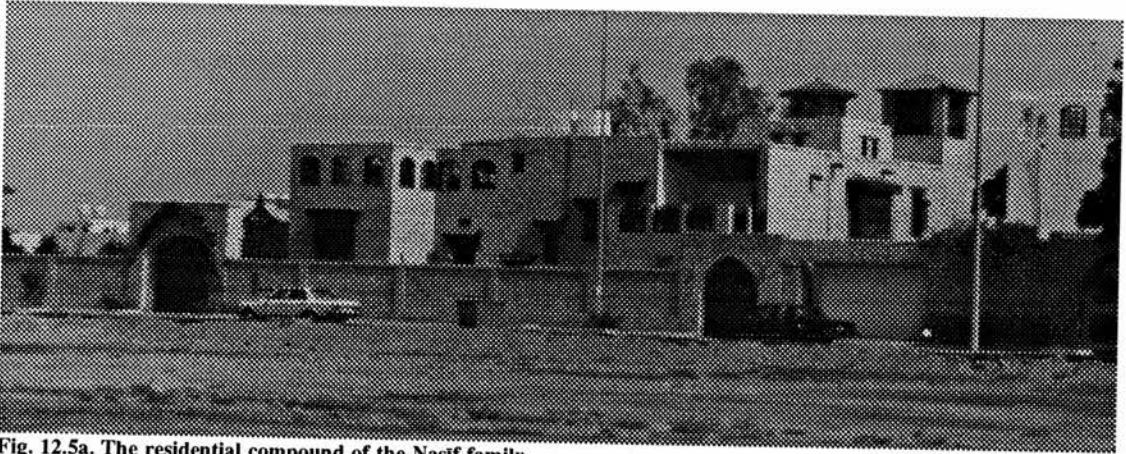


Fig. 12.5a. The residential compound of the Naṣīf family.

Such use of fragmented images from the past might carry hints of 'traditionality' to the interested user, hence 'authenticity' and rightfulness. In such cases, the traditional house is used as an image, an object that should - explicitly and specifically - be imitated for what it is. It may be argued that such traditionalized

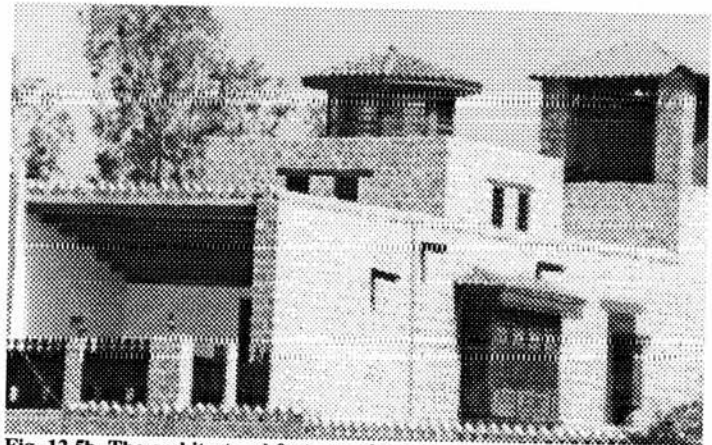


Fig. 12.5b. The architectural features of the family house included *shukhsheikha* and *malqaff* (air and light inlets) which are typical of traditional Cairene houses.

house models are not mere imitations but symbols because architectural symbolism begins to come into play when the design of a house uses shapes or architectural elements that carry a conventional meaning, and the more firmly a traditional symbol attaches itself to an appropriate physical image, the more convincingly it survives changes in ideology and beliefs. Even then, for a traditional architectural element to be used as an expressive element, its shape must be seen as dynamic: used. But, to take the 'symbol' argument to the end, while the historic functions of the *rowshān*,

<sup>10</sup> The compound was described by one of the *mu'allemin* as *Shughul baṣṣāmīṭ*, *muba'gar* (lit. mongrel, spotty = varied, eclectic), and by another (who only saw a photograph of the compound) as *shughul gharīb* (unfamiliar, alien work).



for example, could be carried out elsewhere in the house, as with a modern screened balcony, the image presented by a replica could be used as a symbol of past times<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, it could be acceptable if houses today can serve - albeit artificially - to revive the weakened cultural experience of modern Ḥedjāzīs. At the same time, one would not like to think that the traditional meanings of living, sleeping, sitting, eating, entertaining and watching the life of the neighbourhood that the traditional *rowshān* accommodated were reduced to their mere physical significance, and that the principles by which we understand the nature of things and which govern the shape of our products could be reduced to intellectually defined concepts, which no longer benefit from their perceptual sources.

#### 12.1.1.2. Authenticity through unity

A *rowshān*, or any other element of the traditional house, that is simply 'stuck onto' a façade of a modern one, and that is not used in its original way or setting, or that is not structurally a part of that house is not an authentic one. Not only that, but the inauthenticity of this *rowshān* would affect the character of that façade like a contagious disease. Instead of a fake *rowshān* being an enhancement to the character of the house (this being the assumed intention of the architect and client), this will risk the loss of the character of the house altogether. Any architectural element that behaves as though it is dependant on the whole while being, in fact, independent, harbours a discrepancy that is self-contradicting and disturbing. This 'untruth' or deception interferes with the functioning of the part and the whole. Therefore, treating traditional elements of the house as a veneer, or a skin over the pre-existing structure compromises the authenticity of the house and degrades its meaning.

As suggested in chapter eleven, the lack of a complimentary relationship among houses in a given neighbourhood in a Ḥedjāzī city today is the outcome of the emerging individualisation in society. House structures today are conceived as an individual entity, standing on their own regardless of their surroundings. This

---

<sup>11</sup> In this respect, the family compound in the above example could have been more meaningful and spontaneously expressive of a traditional Ḥedjāzī attitude if it did not try to be 'symbolical' by resembling an Egyptian style house. In my opinion, this is a kind of symbolism that has to be intellectually addressed in the basis of historical research of other architectural traditions to be understood. This symbolism is architecturally less compelling than the direct messages of conventionally perceived forms.

prevailing individualism has led to a stress on the singularity of private family houses and their distinctiveness among their neighbours. This chaotic home environment encourages focusing on disconnected items, on single house structures, giving form a priority over function, materiality over spirituality, and parts over wholes. In the integrated culture of traditional Ḥedjāz, individual differences between members of the society existed within the framework of a common and uniform architectural 'style' and thereby enriched rather than disrupted the image of the community as a complete whole. In the traditional sense, houses were not merely objective phenomena but were part of the human environment in which man and house were in contact. The traditional view of home as one's place in the universe meant that man was able to integrate with his place in the universe in a perceptual continuum. How can this be done given today's absence of a unifying structure to the whole, and the discrepancy between house and neighbourhood, between home and home-range?

The increased trends towards individualism has the effect of causing an architectural disunity on two levels. Commercial competition on the part of the architect and the distinctiveness sought by the client both reflect themselves in a disintegrated approach to the architectural process. The tendency is to perceive house construction as an agglomerative exercise combining a variety of 'features' into a composite rather than trying to define the personality of the house or the user and designing the elements in sympathy. Therefore, the house no longer relates to any social location; it derives nothing from the wider environment and contributes nothing to it. This 'distinctiveness' is alienation. In terms of architectural 'linguistics,' we can say that the difference between the modern house and a traditional one is the difference between the sterility of a monologue and the productiveness of dialogue. Such houses are features of imitative fashionability and contrivance rather than a true originality within an organic context - which is the prerequisite of authenticity. Such an example is shown in figure (12.2.).

Unity implies similarity, communality, cohesion, integration, harmony: adherence to norms, common values, beliefs and world views. These were the prevalent socio-cultural themes of traditional Ḥedjāz, as discussed in chapters one, three, five, seven, eight, nine and ten. Deviation from norms was and is a major cause of inauthenticity in Ḥedjāz. For example, we see in chapter seven that observing the norms of Ḥedjāz was the only means of an individual's existence and integration as a member of the society. In chapter eight we see how communal beliefs, values and

norms led to the establishment of internal and external worlds, both of which were the basis of existence in the universe and the establishment of Home. We also see in the same chapter how wide the home-range conceived by an individual was, being the result of a commonality of purpose, values and beliefs. In chapter nine we see how a house that did not conform to the socio-cultural norms was described as *gharīb* or *dakhīl* (alien or strange). In chapter ten, all that we regarded as 'constants,' such as the common cultural-language, group solidarity, the preference for using local building material, gradual growth,... etc., pointed to the traditional emphasis on the integration and cohesion of the society, and were all reflected in the houses themselves.

By definition, a norm is "*an authoritative rule or standard: model, type, pattern. A standard of conduct or ethical value: a principle of right action. An ideal standard binding upon members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behaviour. A pattern or trait taken or estimated to be typical in the behaviour of a social group because its most frequently observed.*"<sup>12</sup> A norm then, works as a control, a force which prescribes the place and function of everybody and everything contributing to it. As we see in chapters nine, ten and eleven, the main enemy of conformity to norms in traditional Ḥedjāz was incompatibility and distinctiveness<sup>13</sup> leading to disorder and instability. Naturally, as in every society, these norms did not meet the needs of every individual, and even if they did, some did not wholly surrender their initiative to them<sup>14</sup>. In general, and in spite of the relative degree of freedom given to traditional clients and builders, ranges of adaptation, and ways of responding to circumstances were prearranged, as we see in chapter ten. This social and spatial oneness bred architectural unity and authenticity because it prevented fragmentation, impurity or disorder, at least visually.

---

<sup>12</sup> Webster's Third New International Dictionary. 3 vols. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1981. 2:1540.

<sup>13</sup> For example the statement that "the original and genuine Ḥedjāzī family did not need to go through all this [showing-off],...Between us, the ordinary Ḥedjāzīs, if one of us started spending large sums of money on the façades of his house, people became offended, and he was condemned for trying to be different. It was as if belonging to us did not suit him, and he was immediately shunned by the *ḥāra*..." (Al-Makkī family, Jeddah, May 18, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> For example: "The sharīf wanted the best craftsmen to build this house for him. He also wanted it to be a model on its own in order to make it different from the ordinary houses of Jeddah." (*Mu'allem Ṣaḍāqah Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 6, 1990).

A norm is also defined as *"a genuine aspect of the percept itself, although not tangibly present. Any perceived deviation from a virtually present norm endows the structure with strong dynamic tension, directed either toward the norm or away from it."*<sup>15</sup> The latter was the case in Ḥedjāz when the traditional authentic harmony, order, integration, balance, stability,...etc, was violated during the middle 1900s through wide departure from any existing culturally-accepted matrix, and from the pattern of the whole. Family houses like those shown in figure (12.2.) emerged in the midst of a socially and physically coherent neighbourhood and threatened the balance achieved by generations as noted by *mu'allem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin* when he referred to the Ḥedjāzī rush to modernity in the 1950s: *"what the ant [tradition] collected in a year, the camel [modernity] squashed with its foot in a single step."*<sup>16</sup>

The integral relationship between the various elements of a given traditional Ḥedjāzī urban setting was a primary one. Each element derived from its character certain capacities and requirements: each was able to serve some purpose that was consistent with that of others. Each element needed certain conditions in order to function, and these needs were, in turn, fulfilled by other elements and so forth. On the basis of the characteristics of these individual units or elements, the whole arranged itself. The weight and importance of each element derived from a sort of power play, with the aspirations of every individual unit confronting those of its neighbours. A solution was achieved when demands of all participants were balanced against one another.

On the other hand, in the modern 'individualistic' Ḥedjāzī society, each member is permitted and even encouraged to select his elements exclusively on the basis of his own egocentric interests and to get away with as much as others allow him to (what is broadly agreed upon as acceptable by the society). The result is the chaos familiar to modern Ḥedjāzīs - the ugly incompatibility of house models that constitute so much of today's residential areas (e.g., Chinese roofs on Post-Modern villas). Such disorder, which could hardly prevail in a unified cultural situation, is tolerated only as long as no common purpose imposes itself.

---

<sup>15</sup> Arnheim, Rudolf. The Dynamics of Architectural Form. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. 180.

<sup>16</sup> Originally a traditional Ḥedjāzī proverb, used by *mu'allem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin* to serve his particular meaning. (Jeddah, April 7, 1990).

Traditionally, the overall pattern of the house, its plans and elevations, once decided upon, governs the formation of components. The fusion of basic functions and directions in complex wholes is analogous to organic growth, which builds by seamless continuity and treats even the joints as links rather than distinct parts. There was always a dominant socio-cultural schema that determined the place and function of every individual component. Arrangement of houses and different spaces in a neighbourhood, as well as the elements and components in an individual house was not left to chances, otherwise a persistent struggle, reminiscent of today, would have led to unproductive solutions, which was rarely the case.

Another area of authenticity brought about by unity in traditional Ḥedjāz was the total harmony between the client and the designer and builder that is discussed in previous chapters. Today, for example, when the ideas of the architect and those of the client cannot be accommodated in an integrated order, the result we see in modern Ḥedjāzī cities is 'unreadable' architectures, a kind of ambiguity that prevents the design of the house from making its character manifest without the contradiction and disorder of an eclectic arrangement of both their ideas.

Accordingly, the appropriate degree of unity among various components of an architectural whole is directly related to the functional relations between them. This does not mean that maximum unity is the optimum architectural solution, nor does it imply that all functions of the house should be differentiated in appearance. The various functions of the house are related to one another in a more or less intricate pattern of connections and separations. The unity at the level of overall design in the traditional Ḥedjāzī house could be attributed to the common roles and functions of different house compartments. The uniformity of the building corresponded to what was accepted as uniform in the various families' needs. The overall formal order reached precisely as far as the function order, and the discontinuation of this order behind the door of each apartment was acceptable because, in fact, a separate way of life quite legitimately reigned in each family living quarter. The uniformity of the multi-family house of traditional Ḥedjāz symbolized a shared purpose and a monotonous equality. The hierarchical order, discussed in chapter ten, as a constant and a prerequisite of traditional Ḥedjāzī houses stretched as far as was needed for the



functional unity of the various components of the house<sup>17</sup>. No architectural distinction were illustrated between the living quarters of each gender or age group other than those obviously necessary for domestic intercourse.

Therefore, one can determine which element of the house is authentic and which is not by simply examining its use, its connection with everyday life and its relation to the whole. Furthermore, a reciprocal relationship between the house and its environment, social and physical, must be implicitly and explicitly demonstrated in one wholistic structure. The authenticity of the character of any element of the house becomes a genuine quality that is worth replicating when its symbolism is strong enough to carry its associative meaning to the structure in which it is used rather than to which it is attached.

#### **12.1.1.3. Authenticity through adherence to religion**

It was emphasized many times in the course of this research that the traditional Ḥedjāzī house was a reflection of socio-cultural beliefs. As time passed, these traditional considerations ceased to guide emotions but rather became subdued in the daily routines, rituals and habits of the people. Today, a further consequence of the deviation from the traditional unity of religious and cultural principles is that many, not being able to discriminate between inner religious sentiments and outer habits, forget the former and conduct the latter automatically. And so frequently, some, no matter how eager traditional followers they may be, are spiritually as far from the fundamental meaning of religion as the society will allow.

As we see in chapters seven, ten, and eleven, the traditional Ḥedjāzī *mu'allemin* treated Islam as the main reference and guide in their lives and they started from a belief in its absolute authority. While the traditional *mu'allemin* looked at architectural problems as believers, the rationalism of modern architect seeks to reinvent reality in their own terms.

---

<sup>17</sup> The prevailing dwelling type in modern Ḥedjāz is the independent single family house, which encourages individuality. This individuality is further accentuated by the gridiron or subdivision system of arranging residential areas in the modern parts of most Ḥedjāzī cities.



Islam states that, as God's vicegerent on earth, man was given the faculty of 'creation' by the Almighty Creator. 'Creation' here does not refer to man's ability to enhance the divine creation, but rather to his duty to ensure its natural balance and protect its wealth and beauty. It was therefore, man's duty to be honest and sincere in his 'creations,' in respect to his Master's teachings. God achieves perfection in the simplest of His creations as well as in His most complex, and so should man, for that is the 'true' creation: truthful and honest. But, when we say that the architect is capable of inventing or 'creating,' we mean a totally different sort of creation from that of his Master. It is a kind of creation that should inspire admiration, for it is a faithful product of God's will executed in the spirit of humility. We are not talking about a mere display of intentions, rather about man's actions in accordance with what God orders him to: *"God likes only those amongst you who if they do something, they refine it, or complete it."*<sup>18</sup>

To refine and complete here means to fulfil, to accomplish, to make total and whole. God orders man to look at the universe to see the signs of His perfection, The Master wants His pupil to learn something, not to copy Him, because that is far beyond the capabilities of man. Such is reflected in the more sublime attempts at imitation. One cannot make a likeness of the universe, because one cannot imitate it or its Creator. Therefore, one can reflect the universe not by doing **what** God does, which is impossible, but **as** God does in the universe: to complete with honesty and make whole. In other words, one can still express the forms seen in the universe, even though one cannot imitate its Creator:

O men! Here is a parable set forth! Listen to it! Those on whom, besides God, ye call, cannot create (even) a fly, if they all met together for the purpose...(Qur'ān, Sūra XXII: 73, Ḥadj).

As designers, we perceive the structure and organic composition of the universe as architectural by nature, and so throughout all things, macrocosmic or microcosmic. Man's architecture, however, must not copy that of the universe, but should try to interpret the clues provided in it and the system by which it operates, and then try to represent the laws of the universe by acting according to them. God's form-expression - as manifest in the universe - is a specific language. It is a language

---

<sup>18</sup> An authentic Prophetic Ḥadīth.

by means of which God communicates with those whom *ya'qilūn, yubṣirūn, yatafakarrūn*<sup>19</sup> or those who are able to understand, consider, *see* with their 'hearts' or feel with their senses. Thus, the more we study God's form world, the more it becomes evident how rich in inventiveness His form language is. This language should be our source of inspiration and not a direct model to copy.

Mircea Eliade argues that "*creation means the repetition of the original creation....creation is the transformation of chaos into cosmos*,"<sup>20</sup> suggesting that the true forms of origin are reconstructed by a process of imitating originals. The objective of imitation, hence, is to create something new out of the synthesis of the original model, the universe. Man, according to Quatremère de Quincy, does not create in the elementary sense of the word, but simply finds new combinations of pre-existing elements<sup>21</sup>. Man, then, should return to the archetypes that relate to the cosmic order - as did the traditional Ḥedjāzīes: to the path of tradition that leads back to the universe. In nature, the balance between form and function has been worked out to perfection to maintain survival. Likewise, simple traditional forms, man-made as they were, have become in their own right creations that have a natural place in the universe.

Islam prescribes how the Muslim is to conduct his life within the community in utmost detail, to the extent that some foreign observers described it as very much a religion of the community, not of the individual. But Islam, as a way of life, neither forbids nor hinders progress and the traditional Ḥedjāzīes always found their identity within it. It has also lately, however, ceased to be the unifying force that it was, since modern Ḥedjāzīes no longer adhere to it in the same degree. What is needed in Ḥedjāz today is a revival of Islamic values, a renewal of faith in the teachings of Islam, to

---

<sup>19</sup> As in the following Qur'ānic verses: "Thus doth God make clear His signs to you: in order that ye may understand." (Sūra II:242, *Baqarah*); "...Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who consider." (Sūra XIII:3, *Ra'ad*); "...Have they not the vision." (Sūra XXXII:27, *Sadjdah*); "...They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle,- nay more misguided: for they are heedless." (Sūra VII:179, *A'arāf*).

<sup>20</sup> See Eliade, Mircea. The Sacred and the Profane. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959. 56.

<sup>21</sup> See De Quincy, Quatremère. "A Definition of Imitation." Imitation and Innovation in Architectural Design. Ed. Lucien Steil. New York: Academy Editions/St.Martin's Press, 1988. 11.

assure the next generations of clients and architects that only adherence to traditional values and religious teachings can provide the answers to their problems.

The modern departure from religion, culture and nature, hence from authentic architectural language of form, could be explained along the lines previously suggested: in the period before the full effect of the oil boom was realized In Ḥedjāz, there was a well established architectural language of form; later on, during the middle 1900s, it was necessary to destroy this language to catch up with the image of a modern, 'sophisticated' and developed nations. Once the language was destroyed, it was necessary to develop another, and it was here that the problem of modern Ḥedjāzī architecture arose. As if it were impossible to create a modern Ḥedjāzī architectural language of form, it was thought appropriate for local and foreign architects to imitate and copy the architectural language of others.

#### **12.1.2. Could we transmit the character of 'authentic' houses to make societies aware of their meanings and significance?**

If we - at least as a compromise - accept the replication of the traditional architectural elements of Ḥedjāz under the umbrella of symbolism, then the remedy for this degradation of traditional symbols depends on the extent of the architect's success in reinforcing the traditional spiritual connotation inherent in all the simple aspects of Ḥedjāzī domesticity. He could do this by cultivating the expressive qualities in the shapes he invents and not in those he copies. Modern architects who are providing 'traditionalized' house model are not seeking to grant 'authenticity' to their products; on the contrary, *"their philosophy is not that we are giving you the reproduction so that you will want the original, but rather we are giving you the enhanced reproduction so that you will forget the original. The reproduction has become an original and architecture has transformed the past."*<sup>22</sup> By 're-legitimizing' and 're-validating'<sup>23</sup> the traditional architectural vocabulary, architects were able to

---

<sup>22</sup> Khan, Hasan-Uddin and Charles Moore. "The Architecture of the Individual House: Understanding the Models." The Architecture of Housing: Exploring Architecture in Islamic Cultures. Proceedings of an international seminar sponsored by the Aga Khan Award for architecture, The African Union of Architects and the Association of Architects of Tanzania: Zanzibar, the United Republic of Tanzania, 12-15 October, 1988. 178-180.

<sup>23</sup> Terminologies by Ismail Serageldin. "Comment" in The Architecture of Housing: Exploring Architecture in Islamic Cultures. 1988. 203.

present to the modern Ḥedjāzī society their own perception (and naturally that of their clients) of a certain cultural image, and convey it as something 'original' or 'different.'

However, the exploitation of architectural media must not be confused with creation as a response to a genuine social need. Traditional Ḥedjāzī houses with their forms and space configurations were 'shaped for living' and that constituted their spiritual value. Traditional forms followed traditional functions in the sense that they satisfied the functional requirements that were their reasons for 'being' - both physical and spiritual ones. It follows that any form-appearance lacking in spiritual qualities has no vitality insofar as the culture that produced the form is absent. Today's Ḥedjāzī houses use a language of form that indicates cultural indifference and, therefore, it is natural that these houses are accused of either fostering a materialistic culture or are the result of one.

Obviously, form in architecture is inescapable. Ultimately, whatever we design or build will have a physical form but what gives it life is what is done in and around it: its treatment; maintenance and ultimate life depend on its acceptance by people. But - from a modernistic point of view - these traditional forms are dead. The principles that lie behind them seem to be dead too as we see in chapter eleven. Rationalism artificially separates form from principles and denies integrity of organization, respect for human scale, proportion, rhythm, repose, and the understanding of the network of human and formal relationships out of which traditional Ḥedjāzī domestic architecture arose. Cultural expressions imposed by architect's fanciful decisions, disregarding the realm of public values, religion and the primordial instincts towards the home environment, become meaningless. A meaningless architecture is an architecture that doesn't represent anyone's beliefs or feelings. A truly meaningless architecture has no cultural sincerity and thus ceases to be architecture. Meaning in traditional architecture was instilled into its forms at its very inception, and enriched through time with use.

One of the main lesson gained from this research is that there are many ways to revive traditional architectural forms and meanings. The lowest of these ways are copying, imitation and assimilation, while the highest are innovation and integration. The resolution to the problem of meaning-recreation through imitation requires a deeper understanding of the kinds of meaning that emerge in person-environment interaction, and a fundamental distinction between the use-based meaning of the

original architectural element and the image-based meaning of imitation. In the above mentioned example of the *rowshān*, meaning was found in the use of the *rowshān*, a meaning that was connected to its shape, design, and structure.

I can appreciate the desire of both clients and architects to retreat to the past and imitate forms that are indicative of the great heritage associated with it. But the problem with 'traditionalized' modern buildings is that they try to translate models of traditional domestic architecture into technological likeness. They are refashioned versions of non-native buildings. These modern models *look* like traditional buildings and that is all they do. This is simply one form overlaid upon the other, fixed as it were by the difference of origin. A counter argument to the issue of imitating traditional forms is raised by Suzanne Blier's. She states that when buildings incorporate traditional design features they encourage users to retrace the works and lives of their forefathers. Therefore, she recommends that modern houses should 'borrow' their 'images' from the experiences of the past so as to encourage people to reaffirm their identity and activity<sup>24</sup>.

This however, seems similar to the problem of imitating Western design themes in modern Ḥedjāz. Extensive travel abroad helped the modern Ḥedjāzī to gain an amalgam of international house 'images.' I presume that, as a result of the excitement felt during visits to different place, Ḥedjāzīs were anxious to build replicas of Swiss cottages, Spanish haciendas, French chateaus, Roman villas and so on. What they seem to have forgotten - I think - is that the home environment is the most personal of places, the setting for intimate and enduring relationships. It represents an investment and a long term commitment, and those who created these houses in the first place were not looking for adventure; and the novel, exciting, interesting places that attracted the modern Ḥedjāzī travellers - as most of them discovered later on - are often undesirable to live in. A quick look at what has been built so far in the city of Jeddah, for example, shows repeated misfits between house form and culture as it is. There has been a failure to deal adequately with private open spaces, to relate house type to family type, to recognize the climatic impact on new materials, to recognize the cultural use of materials, to consider how houses evolve and more generally to meet the lifestyle needs of the people.

---

<sup>24</sup> Blier, Suzanne Preston. The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architecture Expression. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. 2.



We cannot deny that the traditional Ḥedjāzī *mu'allemin* borrowed architectural elements from other regions. If we look again at what has been built in 18th and middle 20th centuries Ḥedjāz (chapter three), we will find that there is no concrete feature that was uniquely Ḥedjāzī. The arch, the dome, the bay-windows,...etc., all are forms that were derived from other regions and cultures. However, it was the 'creative' power of those *mu'allemin* that transformed these elements into a unique visual vocabulary, expressions in their entirety that could be identified as belonging to the culture they emerged from. The regional settings, climate, people, available technology and building material, all determined the resulting forms and their cultural expressions. Throughout its development, the Ḥedjāzī house saw new forms emerging and others disappearing as a reflection of the society's evolution, yet one can hardly detect radical changes, complete alterations or exact replicas as is the case today.

This traditional domestic 'art of necessity' as opposed to the modern 'art for art's sake' or 'the art of choice' was born out of a popular demand to protect the expression of socio-cultural beliefs and values among other things. That is why I find myself inclined to term them 'indigenous, direct, true and creative' and most expressive of man's life. And when art is direct, natural and honest, it possesses those qualities that we all can understand and appreciate, an 'instinctive art' like that of nature. Traditional architectural forms came honestly into expression, while modern forms are only an arbitrary play with random shapes, seeking merely for striking effects in the modern spirit; novelty for novelty's sake, advertisement for architects, and status for the owner. It follows that if form is to have cultural significance, it must first be creatively vital and honest. The rest should follow instinctively.

If we are to learn anything from the traditional Ḥedjāzī house, as far as its 'design' is concerned, it must be that of forms-evolution. Any traditional form - like that of the human body - was imagined in connection with the reason for its being, its means of expression and relationship with other adjacent forms in the whole urban setting. As discussed in chapter ten, the evolution of traditional forms depended on a multitude of circumstances and was adequately adjusted towards these circumstances. To use Saarinen's words, traditional architecture was a "*free-architecture, until architects started to borrow forms from earlier times..*"<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> See Saarinen, Eliel. The Search for Form in Art and Architecture. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1985. 266-267.



The imitative forms of today not only lose their quality, they represent an iconography that contributes nothing in overcoming the historical discontinuity which has occurred and which the modern Ḥedjāzī society is living through; the lack of cultural identity. The value of the user of certain forms becomes inverted in many cases. A striking example of this is the gable roofs in a city where it hardly rains three times a year (i.e., Jeddah). The occupants of such houses would have to bear with a non-Arabian desire for low-ceilings for the rest of their lives for no apparent reason other than novelty, distinctiveness and/or Western imitation. Such imitations initially attracted attention because they were perceived as novel and unusual. Later, and by living experience, houses with such forms lost their novelty and were either abandoned or totally rebuilt.

Some modern advocates of 'authentic' forms in the traditional sense - like Saarinen - believe that imitative forms lack creativity in design, and that they are signs of the architect's inability to express. Others<sup>26</sup> believe that the production of a work of architecture is one of emulation; combining imitation and invention. Believers in reviving old forms or imitating them<sup>27</sup>, think that new forms cannot come out of nothing, and that if the choice were given, they would rather bring the old forms back to life. Their opinion is based on the argument that the principle of imitation, or working from precedents in architecture allowed genius to build on the achievements of our forebears and expand inherited traditions by subtle innovation. However, I believe that, as in the case of 'traditionalising' modern buildings, reviving traditional forms for the sake of it or without consideration to their use and integration in the overall form is still, at the end of the day, imitation.

The reason for saying this is derived from what is referred to in chapter ten as the problem of architectural 'style.' Traditional buildings reflected their belonging to a certain 'style,'<sup>28</sup> or type, without there having been a conscious effort by the

---

<sup>26</sup> Like Robert Stern in his "Design as Emulation." Imitation and Innovation in Architectural Design. Ed. Lucien Steil. New York: Academy Editions/St.Martin's Press, 1988. 21.

<sup>27</sup> like Steil, Lucien. "On Imitation." Imitation and Innovation in Architectural Design. Ed. Lucien Steil. New York: Academy Editions/St.Martin's Press, 1988. 8.

<sup>28</sup> For example, 'The Red Sea Style' as termed by Greenlaw. See Greenlaw, Jean-Pierre. The Coral Buildings of Suakin. Leeds: Knight and Forster, 1976. 8.

*mu'allemin* in this direction. In contrast, the designers of modern houses make a deliberate attempt to let their houses proclaim their 'stylistic' affiliation. The architects' tendency towards such imitations may also have appeal as a display of their knowledge of past traditions. But the fact is that the real cultural worth depends entirely on its acceptance by the society and not on the amount of knowledge that the architect possess. As Saarinen puts it "*Culture is the result of what remains in one's mind after the facts of knowledge are forgotten.*"<sup>29</sup> He rightly likened architects who adopt forms without discriminating about their fitness or simply for their novelty, to those living on food that was digested by others.

## 12.2. Could we produce a house today that resonates with the Ḥedjāzī tradition by using modern means?

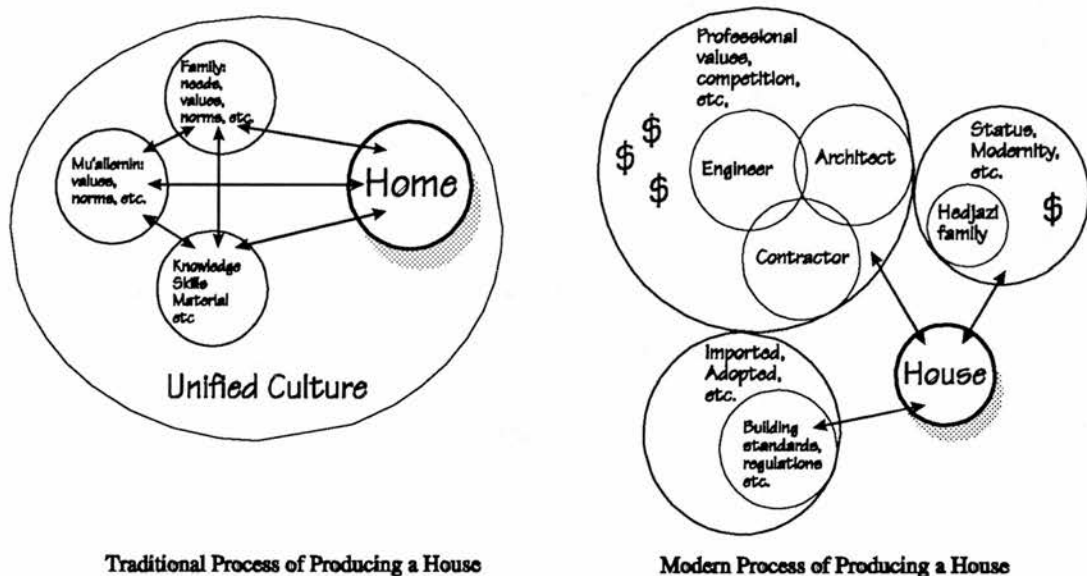


Fig. 12.6. Traditional and modern factors involved in the process of producing a house.

Why cannot we combine the principles of traditional and modern architecture? If most of us - modern Ḥedjāzīs - do not live traditional lifestyles and we enjoy our modern conveniences, why do we not plan for them in our modern structures? In other words, can we produce a house today that relates to the Ḥedjāzī tradition by using contemporary means of producing a house? To shed some light on this proposal, let us recall the process of producing traditional houses and contrast that with the modern process (Fig. 12.6.). The first observation is that the modern process is attended by a

<sup>29</sup> Saarinen, Eliel, 1985. 180.

variety of participating agencies, each of which is operating within its own value system. It is also characterized by a serious deficiency of communication and coherence between these agencies, thus lacking in an identifiable cultural unity. Add to this, as suggested in chapter eleven, that the modern perception of the house is mainly based on its socio-economic value and family status and one could end up with a commodity which in everyday use gains no spiritual enhancement.

In contrast, the traditional process is characterized by a unity and coherence of the participating elements, all operating within a unified value system that creates authenticity in the traditional Ḥedjāzī house, as discussed earlier. What I would suggest is a third hybrid process using elements of both the traditional and modern processes to produce a culturally-authentic Ḥedjāzī house (Fig. 12.7.). This is not a ‘compromise’ between the traditional and modern means of producing a house, rather a new design and building process that would allow today’s architects to deal with modern architectural problems employing modern technologies with the added ingredient of the Ḥedjāzī cultural norms, habits, customs and values of past traditions.

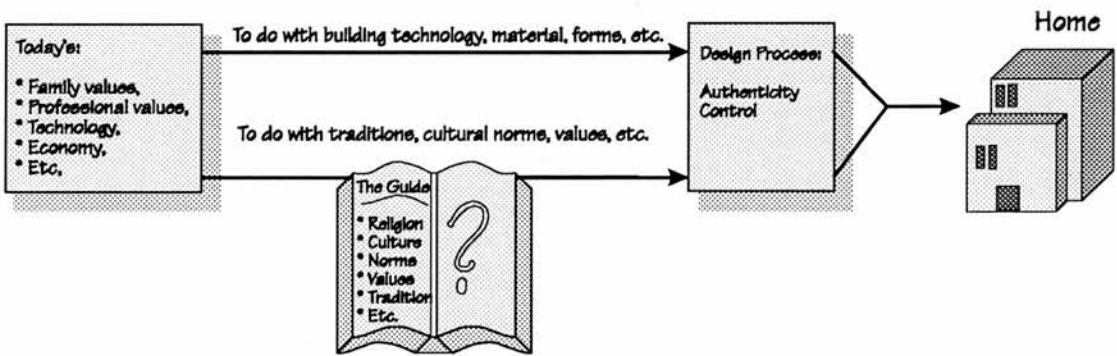


Fig.12.7. A third hybrid process resulting from the use of both the traditional and modern processes to produce a culturally-authentic Ḥedjāzī house.

Furthermore, and instead of striving to find the specifics of this hybrid process, a branch of the Ministry of Municipalities and Rural affairs that is concerned with regulating the production of houses in the region could be established to deal with ‘authenticity control.’ The aim of this department should be the inspection of proposed design schemes to ensure that they comply with certain socio-cultural principles (Fig. 12.8.). These should be derived from the traditions of Ḥedjāz, whether concerned with cultural values or architectural traditions. However, the problem with this proposal is that it implies a certain totalitarianism that is reminiscent of unacceptable historical

politics. It contradicts the essence and meaning of authenticity as a quality that should emerge from within the society and not imposed upon it.

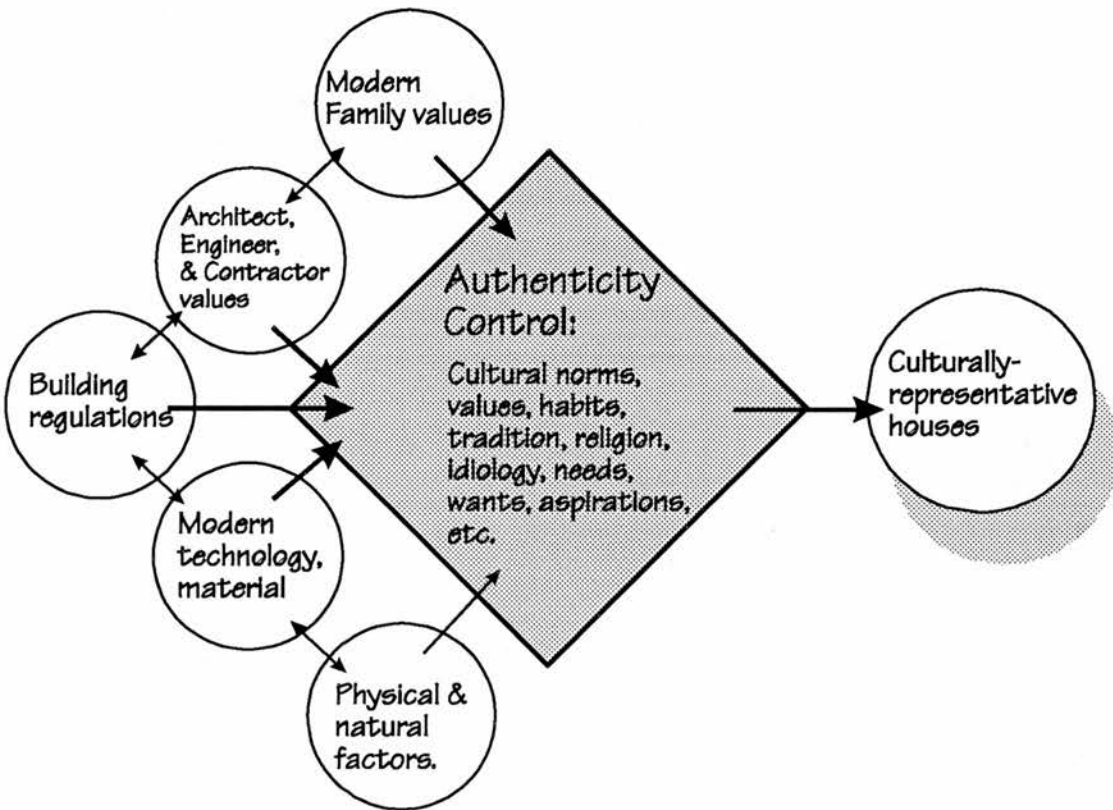


Fig. 12. 8. A governmental agency could inspect architectural authenticity.

Therefore, the problem of architectural authenticity remains a modern dilemma, the solution to which is yet in the hands of society. As discussed in chapter two, the cultural authenticity and unified identity of the traditional Ḥedjāzī society was achieved within a mutually supportive framework, where the traditions of a locality safeguarded its architecture, by maintaining its religious values and sincerely responding to its socio-cultural and physical environments, while architecture safeguarded these by satisfying the set of functions appropriate to it. Such environmental concern and coherency of endeavour throughout the history of Ḥedjāz, shaped the experience, and hence the behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and habitats of its people. Based on this, I am afraid that I am being over-optimistic about the possibility of producing an authentic architecture in modern Ḥedjāz. The possibility exists that authenticity, of the kind described here, is a notion which is in conflict with the values of modernity.

Should modern architects 'revive' old forms or 'create' new ones? Attitudes have to be changed before form is to be influenced. What is called for here is not a re-introduction or revival of old forms as this would mean only imitation. What we are after here is a 'birth' of a new and vital Ḥedjāzī architecture capable of continuing what the previous generations established. One does not show respect to one's parents by imitating their actions. One does so by approaching one's work in the same sincere spirit as one's parents. In this way, the constructive spirit of tradition goes from father to son to grandson, from one generation to the other.

A socio-cultural 'return-to-the-roots' chain reaction is required before traditional forms can be reintegrated into the modern Ḥedjāzīes' everyday life, thence architectural vocabulary. We first need a popular approval of the validity of past traditions. To achieve this we need to see evidence of a desire for restoring the currently blurred cultural identity. Cultural continuity could regain its interrupted momentum through restating contacts with the ancestral past that will strengthen and maintain identity.

To clear what I perceive to be a possible confusion concerning the value judgement presented in this chapter, a distinction might be made between 'Traditionalism' and 'Traditionality.' Traditionalism might be considered as a mode of thought (or I suppose, of architecture), a creed, a description of a passive **condition**. On the other hand, Traditionality might be seen, arguably, as **quality**, an active and so contemporary process or movement, absorbing the past. This contrast might enable us to better emphasise the view that tradition is dynamic. It is from this perspective that I considered the architectural tradition of Ḥedjāz as a dynamic living force, engendering change by 'natural' impulse and encouraging the free exchange of ideas. 'Tradition' does, after all, imply change - or at least movement. In this sense we can have a 'liberal' tradition' or a 'forward-looking' or 'progressive' tradition without contradiction in terms. What we cannot have on a social or intellectual level is a tradition of no change. When we refer to 'changing traditions' or 'time-honoured traditions' we mean usages (the terms are often used as affectionate descriptions of ritualised forms observing a tribute to the past).

We should also appreciate that times have changed and so have the socio-cultural circumstances. We, as modern architects, must be of our time and never copy the traditional language of forms. This must, however, be considered as a reminder of

its time rather than examples to be copied. Copying would not only fail to lend authenticity to our architecture, it would also hinder the emergence of a modern architectural language and, thence, continuity and maintenance of what our traditional forebears began some three or four hundred years ago.

This chapter does not provide the details of the proposed hybrid process of authenticity control, but it does however pave the way for the study of workable models through which houses in Ḥedjāz could be produced following specific methodologies based on the findings of this research. Meanwhile, modern architects may ignore traditional architecture; acknowledge its existence but deny that it has any value, interest or lessons; or they may romanticize it and try to copy it. None of these courses would produce authenticity. The problem of producing authentic homes, or architecturally expressing this in a manner which creates an uplifting environment is that of finding an architect who can frame the rules, educate his clients and assume his role in society as a creator, and a conduit for delight, love, enthusiasm, and understanding.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### FINAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### FINAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

---

This thesis has been aimed at gaining a better understanding than currently available of the traditional Hedjāzī house and the living patterns that were associated with it. This was achieved by interviewing traditional architects and families whose statements not only provided historical accounts of the traditional process of designing and building a house, but also exposed socio-cultural attitudes which emphasize the notion of the house as much more than a merely physical construction. This, therefore has focused on the study of the meanings that the traditional builders and occupants of houses conveyed through their buildings.

The built form of the traditional Hedjāzī house evolved around a set of historical circumstances and functions that were specific to their period and were the product of hundreds of years of learning and modification. Under the seemingly carefree plan of a traditional Hedjāzī *hāra* lay a thorough understanding of the flow of life and action and a humble obedience to the topography of the land and the requirements of the weather. Every element in the traditional Hedjāzī house seems to have arrived at its natural order without being forced into place or accepting compromises. The traditional uses of building materials and the solutions for coping with the climate reveal the triumphs of common sense and simplicity. There, we seem to find man's mind at its clearest, joining with nature in unpretentious teamwork and without nonsense clothed in the values of fashion, style or sophistication.

The thesis has also shown how the traditional houses, each one and collectively, represented a pattern of relationships, the aim of which was to bring order, integrity and meaning to peoples's life - a series of connections between person, group, house and the world. The traditional Hedjāzī's effort to make the home a sacred place served both to legitimise the group itself and its occupation of the land, for in this way the town at large, and the home within it, formed a part of divinely-ordered nature rather than being a merely human creation. The design and building processes provide clear evidence of the desire for correspondence between man, universe and building, each of them a 'dwelling' in the true sense. This reflected the

idea of a supreme unifying order in the universe which is embodied in man. It is this order that the traditional *mu'allemin* has tried to grasp and interpret in his works. This central idea was reinforced by rituals, language and by the building itself.

To better understand the physical and spiritual sides of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house from the perspective of those who designed and built it or lived in it, the research focused on both. By analysing the main components of the traditional house, its constituents, physical and socio-cultural environment, it was possible to grasp the essence of the traditional living environment of the main Ḥedjāzī cities; while the accounts of those who lived in such an environment made it possible to uncover further layers of meaning behind the various aspects of the house, its design and building processes and its living patterns.

The persistence of a fixed spacial organization and the overall stability in time of the form of the traditional house, the societal sanction and legitimacy of precedents in the design and building processes, and the continued use of spaces in accordance with custom, initially led one to think that the traditional domestic architecture of Ḥedjāz was unselfconscious and unreflective. However, what seems at first to be an architecture that strictly adhered to age-old known and tried techniques, codified behaviour and the practice of certain building methods following time-honoured principles, was in fact gradually modified and updated to reflect peoples' changing needs and intentions through the course of time. These modifications were then approved by the traditional Ḥedjāzīs and became established norms and values. Both clients and *mu'allemin* manoeuvred successfully over the years within this range of acceptability and were able to produce what they perceived as culturally-authentic home environments and a degree of variety in the houses.

However, when circumstances changed, it was natural that the formal architectural representation of the traditional Ḥedjāzī house, its living patterns and perceptions of it cease to have a direct validity to the modern society. In order to examine the impact of such shifts in perceptions, the research considered the effects of the socio-cultural changes that accompanied the rapid economic growth of Ḥedjāz at the beginning of the post-oil boom of the 1970s. It examined societal attempts to find a balance between requirements of rapid growth and the presentation of the authentic character of Ḥedjāzī cities and the Islamic cultural heritage. It provided an

account of the new ways of looking at the social environment, the loss of religious certainty and the resulting cultural alienation that have contributed to the state of architectural confusion in today's Hedjāz.

The cultural values and beliefs of modern Hedjāz were manifested in houses that tend to replicate the outer forms of foreign and local traditions, copying modern Western models, or make a combination of possible 'styles.' This raised the question of cultural authenticity and the possible means of rectifying the current loss of a unifying Hedjāzī cultural identity. In an attempt to deal with this problem, the sources of architectural authenticity were examined by looking at possible means of producing culturally-representative houses in today's Hedjāz. The root of such a 'cultural revival' which lies in the continuity of the national cultural heritage, seeks to link the present with the past while admitting the innovations of modernity and the contribution of science, demands a pause for contemplating the cultural heritage of Hedjāz. The examination of possible solution to the problem of cultural and architectural authenticity in today's Hedjāz reveals it is a very complex dilemma - one which may be impossible to resolve.

We need to activate and establish new harmonious links between the past, present and the future, between economic development and cultural identity. To be able to accomplish authentic architecture, our actions must be based on those principles that are fundamental, and that are 'naturally' inherent in all things. It is not the new architectural 'styles' that are responsible for the shift in people's perceptions of themselves, their houses or their architects. Physical change without social change would accomplish nothing and the reverse is also true. It is the lifestyle rather than the building which makes for impersonality; yet still many clients and architects, not realizing this priority, try to 'acculturate' their dwellings by means of architectural devices. Unfortunately, such efforts, since they do not attack the root situation, which is primarily socio-cultural, can never be more than marginally successful.

*Mu'allem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, may God forgive him, ended his interview on the last day of our meetings with the following conclusion:

If some people today think that our days were harsh and that we were miserable, we could never, however, be inferior to you modern Hedjāzīs...the merits of old Hedjāz and its strength lay in the solidarity

of people and not in that of stones [the structural soundness of buildings] and this is what make us superior..., who is older than my grandmother but my grandfather: they are both dead and may God refine our ends [what is worse than the past but the present, those who work towards their end will win on the day of judgement]. (*Mu'alleem Şaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin*, Jeddah, April 15, 1990).

The tradition of the Ḥedjāz was so rich, complex and pervasive in everyday life that we do an injustice to such a culture in effecting any separation of one feature of it from the others. I think that by focusing on the house and the notion of home as a single feature of that culture, I did just that. One cannot interpret any aspect of a culture apart from, and without the cooperation of the members of the culture in question. It was, therefore, a risky assumption that an outsider like myself, within a matter of months and relying on the accounts of few individuals, could adequately explain and describe a whole traditional culture; and that I, in the process, could transcend my own modern culture. Some of the data presented in this thesis might suffer from misinterpretation as a result of my attempts to express verbally what traditionally used to be discreetly taken for granted. The main problem was that a full investigation of such an unconscious culture could be accomplished only by actual observation of real events in normal settings and contexts.

APPENDIX A

ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS  
OF INTERVIEWS



## APPENDIX A

### ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF INTERVIEWS

---

This appendix is intended as a further explanation of the advantages and limitations of the process of obtaining oral history through interviews with the clients and builders of traditional Hedjāz which is discussed in chapter four:

Since the events and topics recounted in those interviews were virtually limitless, 'filtering' the tapes by discriminating between important material and ordinary information had to be undertaken. The main technique, which required both careful judgement and imagination, was sorting the transcribed material under the different pre-determined categories by weighing them for accuracy and relevance, while the rest of the tape was placed under a miscellaneous category for later usage. By gathering an ample number of oral accounts describing the time period targeted by the research, it was enough to develop an image about certain trends and unfold certain patterns of lifestyles.

Divergent accounts were not necessarily in disagreement with each other, although they seemed to be as such on the surface. For example, when a number of narratives about the building process went in different directions, they collectively complemented each other when placed side by side, analyzed and the basic common threads involved were discerned. In almost every conducted interview, each oral account represented certain facts as known by their narrator. Each interview in its own represented that portion of the story with which the narrator could naturally identify through personal or ancestral association.

Most informants drew their information from personal experience and eyewitness accounts; firsthand observations of changes in the community's physical and social make-up across the years, personal experiences of the elderly and conversations with other members of the community. Some interviewees, however, drew from knowledge gleaned from all sorts of written documents and printed materials. The variety of these sources, an enumeration which was by no means exhaustive, produced a broad range of topics that made up the bulk of this thesis. The main characteristics of such accounts is that the narrator and his or her family were usually the centre of the action in his or her own narratives. Those accounts were also

usually highly polished from many retelling and most tend to cast the narrator in a favourable light. Family stories in particular tend to concentrate on illustrating the family's role in the community's economic, social and political structure along with the peculiarities in the family's past (e.g., brave or eccentric relatives).

In the cases of *mu'allemin*, whose main source of livelihood and pride was their work, much of what they knew about the past had to do with their craft. Since the historical traditions of this group were usually known and passed along orally, mainly among the group's members, the narratives of *mu'allemin* were characterized by an added secondhand knowledge of how things were done before their time (usually from a parent or an elderly master-builder). They were also characterized by being focused on striking or unusual occurrences, encounters with famous persons, craftsmanship, anecdotes, construction accidents and so on.

Personal recollections associated with buildings, furniture, tools and other artifacts personalized those objects and provided vivid glimpses of life in traditional Hedjāz. The recollections of customs associated with the use of certain building materials or artifacts in different sets of events and occasions added further layers of meaning to otherwise objects of antiquity.

Where formal history tends to be generalized and impersonal, orally communicated history is specific and intensely personalized. Accounts offered by the informants about the lifestyles of their ancestors conveyed an intimate view of the remote past covering a greater scope of the studied time period and provided a continuous link of events, building processes, origins of building techniques,...etc. While written formal history tends to describe what happened within a certain period of time, personal recollections provide insights into how people felt about what happened during such events. This means that the latter could be subjective, biased and evaluative because it drives from personal experiences. However, orally communicated material could also carry the informants' and community's attitudes as expressed in the oral accounts. The advantages of such characteristics are, for example, the informants' reliance on visual imagery and striking details which could be easily translated into detailed and fairly accurate drawings. The wealth of images and details served to conjure up vivid mental pictures of the past that stirred further unstructured questions.

Throughout the interviews, gestures had always been inseparable from speech, especially when the vocabulary was limited. As seen in this thesis, the highly visual terms in which the past was presented by the *mu'allemin* and family members was of vital importance to the research. Their verbally-painted images served to present the past in graphic human terms, expressing a sense of the past as it was actually experienced. The recollections of my informants indicated the emphasis given by each individual concerning certain details of the house, and provided insights into the private human motivations behind certain actions. It also implies that an informant's psychological experience regarding a place, an event or an object in the house depends upon which meanings were associated with it at a particular time. No one individual recalled everything about a certain point or question, since individual narrators responded to and recounted those aspects of a certain event or detail that most appealed to them emotionally or professionally (e.g., builders vs. clients). Therefore, the chances of one informant forgetting a certain step along the building process for example, because of over-emphasis given to a certain point could be rectified by the recollections of another informant who happened, for instance to give different emphasis on a different point and so on. So each narrative was self-contained in its own and the resulting narrative complex of a number of informants revealed a great deal about what people believe to be more important in their community's past.

Chronological ordering of events, however, could not be so accurately documented. Most of my informants could not organize events along a sequence or a historical framework but rather as association with other persons or events. For example, in an attempt to determine the origin of the wooden bay-windows in Hedjāz, the reply was that an "Egyptian carpenter produced the best of them." The emergence of bay-windows was more important to the respondent than who brought it; in this case, what happened was more important than who was involved. A similar thing happened when I asked about the origin of plastering house façades, the reply was that "it happened after the Turks left!" This relative dating of events by association with other episodes in people's life shows how the past becomes meaningful only when it has been experienced personally<sup>1</sup>. Persons, places and events were more important in

---

<sup>1</sup> Using certain historical events as references of time depended in most cases on the scale of the event, its repetition and duration, and who was involved or excluded. This, however, differed from one informant to the other depending on the meaning and importance of the event in the life of the respondent (i.e., the death of a son during the invasion of the Turks).

the *mu'allems* perception of the past; time was not. In most cases, respondents focused on the question and then talked around it adding some valuable information beyond the question itself but stripped of any time reference. The ordering principle was not time, but the emotional associations that the informants had with the events or objects being described (e.g., "The house that saw the birth of the my first son.")

The prominence of emotional aspects of orally communicated history was of extreme importance to the research, and was perhaps equally important to my work because of the historical facts them conveyed. For example in their description of their perception of what were the ingredients of 'home' - as opposed to house - I obtained the most poetic and vivid of images, all of which were saturated with emotions and feelings for each and every part of the house. This pointed to which parts of the house were more important than others, which part of the structure was more intangible and spiritually dominant, and the like. This revealed that the spirituality of some parts of the building was embedded and even submerged in the physical characteristics of that part.

A noticeable common occurrence that took place in almost all the interviews was the glorification of the past regardless of the informants' prosperity or hardship at the time<sup>2</sup>. The 'good old days' as a pre-existing model could have been taken for granted if a clear understanding of this process of narrative patterning was not recognized after the first few interviews. People tended to remember the past selectively and in conformity with this model which was, to some extent, misleading and inaccurate if the subject was not approached indirectly (orally-communicated tradition is always retrospective where the past is perceived through the screen of the present).

But although the materials elicited and gathered here originated from oral sources, they eventually ended up as written records. These had to be more organized, coherent and concise than their source. This meant that they had to be edited before being used. There appeared some problems as far as presenting the recorded materials of the interviews to the reader. Problems of communication was mainly caused by a

---

<sup>2</sup> Montell, who conducted extensive interviews in the southern parts of the United states, drew similar conclusions. See Allen, Barbara and Lynwood Montell. From Memory to History: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research. Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1981. *Passim*.

number of reasons, the first of which was that the traditional spoken Ḥedjāzī dialect is surrounded by fringes which gave added emotional and irrational meanings, especially as understood by non-natives or young Ḥedjāzīs. The second difficulty was that the traditional vocabulary has many implicit connotations. Finally, the building-guild as a specific cultural group had its own specific jargon involving codes and terminologies which were not readily comprehensible by other elder Ḥedjāzīs outside the building guild, let alone the new generation of Ḥedjāzīs<sup>3</sup>. Any translation of this genuine Ḥedjāzī dialect into standard academic English - or even Arabic for that matter - would have removed the specific disclosure which came in the dialect as such<sup>4</sup>.

Another limitation was the selection and sampling of respondents which was not possible due to the relatively small number of the remaining elderly members of the building guild who were able to give interviews. A certain degree of caution was considered to guarantee the authority of the respondent to avoid bias and to produce credible responses. This problem did not only manifest in the unavailability of informants but also in that of remaining buildings.

Furthermore, being an insider by birth and residency could be considered as both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage of being a natural insider is having the knowledge of the locations and context of the general background of the subject being investigated as well as an intuitive feeling for the place and people. Also being a member of the culture of the people with whom I was working allowed me to share with them - at least the knowledge of - some major historical experiences and a cultural system that is based on similar values, symbols, customs, and attitudes.

---

<sup>3</sup> For example the term '*ramram*' which the traditional *mu'allemin* used to mean 'to restore' is used today by modern Ḥedjāzīs to mean 'to collect useless material.' The origin of the latter is believed to be Egyptian.

<sup>4</sup> The Ḥedjāzī dialect or colloquial accent is almost the same in Makkah, Jeddah, Al-Madinah, Taif and Yanbu with very minor differences. When compared with the rest of the Arab world, the Ḥedjāzī dialect could be characterized with its clarity, subtleness and correct pronunciation of the classical Arabic dialect except for some letters. For example, while the name 'Ḥejāz' (as in Jaz) is pronounced as such in most Middle Eastern countries - except for Egypt in which it would be pronounced as 'Ḥegāz' (as in gas) - the letter 'J' in the local Ḥedjāzī dialect would be pronounced as a 'DJ,' (as in hedges) where the letter 'D' is stressed. These were affected by the influx of non-Arab pilgrims through the course of history. It is notable, however, that the traditional Ḥedjāzī dialect epitomise, shorten, abbreviate, abridge, substitute, reverse and change the meaning of the classical Arabic word to another meaning close to or similar to the original word. Examples of these are encountered throughout the research.



On the other hand, the disadvantages of being an insider is the ease by which I could dismiss some significant information as obvious, or taken for granted as facts. Some of the narratives were so familiar as to seem not to require explanation, or was considered as a sensitive subject that the informants expected me not to ask about which made me hesitant to inquire about - knowing that I will not be given the benefit of the doubt enjoyed by a foreigner. Some people whom I interviewed were more likely to talk freely with an outsider about sensitive subjects like politics for instance. This fear of offending the respectable elderly of Ḥedjāz could have led me to avoid exploring what I considered to be unpleasant subjects or that I was not supposed to ask culturally-sensitive questions to an old person and overstep the conventions of age barriers. In such cases, my colleagues had to apologetically explain to the informants that I lived abroad for a long time of my life that it I could overlook such basic manners. Although such cases were not rare, I was then given the advantage of being treated as a pupil who needed to be taught a great deal of things.

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
		<b>Jeddah</b> * <i>Mu ‘allem</i> Ṣaḍaqaḥ ‘Olaimī (29-30). <b>Jeddah/Makkah/Al-Madinah</b> * ‘Afif Family (12-13).
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<b>Jeddah</b> * <i>Mu ‘allem</i> Ṣaḍaqaḥ Karkāchin (6-15). <b>Al-Madinah</b> * <i>Mu ‘allem</i> Ḥamzah Al-Rifī (25-30).	<b>Jeddah/Makkah/Al-Madinah</b> * Al-Makkī family (18-19).	

Table 14.T1. Dates and locations of interviews.



## ARABIC GLOSSARY

## GLOSSARY OF ARABIC WORDS AND MEANINGS

n.sing.	n.pl.	Meaning
<b>Urban constituents</b>		
<i>Baraḥa</i>	<i>Baraḥāt</i>	Open-yard
<i>Bait</i>	<i>Biyūt</i>	House/family
<i>-Bait Sha 'bī</i>		Public/ordinary house
<i>-Bait Shaiyybah</i>		Old house
<i>-Bait Shabāb</i>		Young/new house
<i>Darb</i>	<i>Dorūb</i>	Pathway
<i>Dār</i>	<i>Dūr/diyār</i>	House/family
<i>Funduq</i>	<i>Fanādiq</i>	Hotel
<i>Ḥāra</i>	<i>Ḥawārī</i>	Residential quarter
	<i>Ḥārāt</i>	
<i>-Ḥāra sadd</i>		Cul-de-sac/dead-end.
<i>Jāmi '</i>	<i>Jawāmi '</i>	Congregational mosque
<i>Khān</i>	<i>Khānāt</i>	Lodge
<i>Maḥallah</i>	<i>Maḥellāt</i>	Residential quarter
<i>Maḥil</i>	<i>Maḥillāt</i>	Place/house/room/shop
<i>Masdjed</i>	<i>Masādjed</i>	Mosque
<i>Madrasah</i>	<i>Madāris</i>	School
<i>Manzel</i>	<i>Manāzel</i>	House/lodge
<i>Maskan</i>	<i>Masāken</i>	House
<i>Qabowah</i>	<i>Qabowāt</i>	Covered market place
<i>Qahwa</i>	<i>Qahāwī</i>	Coffee-house

<i>Şaḥn</i>	<i>Şoḥūn</i>	Court
<i>Sakan</i>	<i>Masāken</i>	House
<i>Sarāiyyāh</i>	<i>Sarāiyyāt</i>	Large house/palace
<i>Shāri ‘</i>	<i>Shawāri ‘</i>	Street
<i>Shukkol</i>		low-income/self-built houses
<i>Sūq</i>	<i>Aswāq</i>	Market place

<i>Wikālah</i>	<i>Wikālāt</i>	Merchant centre
----------------	----------------	-----------------

<i>Zāwiyyah</i>	<i>Zāwāiyyāh</i> <i>Zāwiyyāt</i>	Small mosque/angle
-----------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------

<i>Zūqāq</i>	<i>Aziqqah</i> <i>Zaqāiyyiq</i>	Alleyway/lane
--------------	------------------------------------	---------------

#### House constituents

<i>‘Aqd</i>	<i>‘Oqūd</i>	Arches
- <i>Ghums/Makhmūs</i>		Lancet, Tudor and basket-handle arches for staircases
- <i>Naşīf</i>		Round and horseshoe arches
- <i>Maiyytūr</i>		Segmented arch
- <i>Mughrabī</i>		Moroccan trefoil arch

<i>A ‘rāsh al-summār</i>		Parapet
<i>‘Arūsah</i>	<i>‘Arāiyyis</i>	Dolls/denticulate cresting
<i>Arđiyyah</i>	<i>Arđiyyāt</i>	Floor/base of <i>rowshān</i>

<i>Bāb</i>	<i>Abwāb</i>	Door
<i>Bādāhandj/bāzāhandj</i>		Ventilation opening/wind-catch

<i>Bāṭermah</i>	<i>Bāṭermāt</i>	Built-in platform topped with a mattress
<i>Bait al-mā’</i>	<i>Biyūt al-mā’</i>	Bath-room
<i>Bait al-bīr</i>		Well-shaft

<i>Bāzān</i>	<i>Bāzānāt</i>	Water-storage
<i>Bīr</i>	<i>Abiyyār</i>	well/shaft
<i>Bitrah</i>	<i>Bittar</i>	Courses of stone
<i>Burdj</i>	<i>Abrādj</i>	Tower
<i>-Burdj al-seqālah</i>		Tower of scaffolding/scaffolds
<i>Burnaiṭah</i>	<i>Barānīṭ</i>	Hat/hood = top of a <i>rowshān</i>
<i>Dabil</i>	<i>Dibūl</i>	Spetic-tank
<i>Daradj</i>	<i>Dordjān</i>	Stairs
<i>-Sullam</i>	<i>Salālim</i>	Stairs/ladder
<i>-Sullam naqqāl</i>		Portable wooden ladder
<i>-Daradj ma 'qūd</i>		Arched staircase
<i>-Daradj serrī</i>		Service/secret staircase
<i>-Daradj shāmī</i>		Syrian-style external stairs
<i>Dāiyyrah</i>	<i>Dāwāyyir</i>	Circle (shape)
<i>Dihlīz/dehlīz</i>	<i>Dahālīz</i>	Hall/lobby
<i>Digaīsī</i>	<i>Duguss</i>	Storage space
<i>Ḍil'</i>	<i>Ḍūlū'</i>	Ribs/exposed ceiling beams
<i>Dīwān</i>	<i>Dawāwīn</i>	Sitting-room
<i>Dour</i>	<i>Adwār</i>	Floor
<i>Durqā'ah</i>	<i>Durqā'āt</i>	A hall between two <i>iwānāt</i>
<i>Faḥīl al-daradj</i>	<i>Fuḥūl</i>	Staircase shaft
<i>Farshah</i>	<i>Furrush</i>	Cover for stair-treads
<i>Finā'</i>	<i>Afniyyah</i>	Walled yard/open court
<i>Ghourfah</i>	<i>Ghouraff</i>	Room
<i>Ḥalq</i>	<i>Ḥolūq</i>	Throat/frame
<i>-Ḥalq al-bāb</i>		Door-frame
<i>Ḥammām</i>	<i>Ḥammāmāt</i>	Steam/Turkish bath
<i>Ḥanaḥfiyyah</i>	<i>Ḥanaḥfiyyāt</i>	Tabs/water-sources
<i>Ḥaramdīnah</i>	<i>Ḥaramdīnāt</i>	Balconies
<i>Ḥaiyyṭah</i>	<i>Ḥawāiyyiṭ</i>	Wall

<i>Hoūsh</i>	<i>Aḥwāsh</i>	Courtyard
<i>Hoūd</i>	<i>Aḥwād</i>	Basin/tank
<i>Iwān</i>	<i>Iwānāt</i>	Vaulted seating place
<i>Jadowah/Jedār</i>	<i>Judrān</i>	Walls/fence
<i>Jallsah</i>	<i>Jallsāt</i>	The sitting-area of the <i>rowshān</i> An internal sofa located at both sides of a main entrance
<i>Jilā</i>	<i>Jalāwī</i>	Ventilation opening/wind-catch
<i>Khazānah/khuzanah</i>	<i>Khazānāt</i>	Storage-room
<i>Khazzān</i>	<i>Khazzānāt</i>	Water-tank/storage.
<i>Khārdjah</i>	<i>Khārdjāt</i>	Terrace
<i>Khūkhah</i>	<i>Khūkh</i>	Wicket/false-door
<i>Kitf</i>	<i>Aktāff</i>	Shoulder/corner
<i>-Kitf al-ḥadjar</i>		Shoulders/columns of stone
<i>Mabīt</i>	<i>Mabāiyyet</i>	Night-room
<i>Mūḍḍa ‘af</i>	<i>Maḍḍa ‘iff</i>	Caryatids/Brackets carrying a <i>rowshān</i>
<i>-Mūḍḍa ‘af Kūrdī</i>		A wooden frame, painted and/or decorated in the form a stalactites
<i>Madkhal</i>	<i>Madākhil</i>	Doorway
<i>Madjlis</i>	<i>Madjālis</i>	Sitting-room
<i>Maiyyḍah</i>	<i>Mawāḍī</i>	Ablution sink/fountain
<i>Makhzan</i>	<i>Makhāzen</i>	Store
<i>Manqūr/mandjūr</i>		Type of ornamentation
<i>Maq ‘ad</i>	<i>Maqā ‘id</i>	Sitting-room
<i>Mashrābīyyah</i>	<i>Mashrābīyyāt</i>	Bay/oriel-window (Egyptian dialect)
<i>Maṣṭabah</i>	<i>Maṣṭīb</i>	Sitting platform
<i>Maṭbakh</i>	<i>Maṭābikh</i>	Kitchen
<i>Medmāk</i>	<i>Madāmīk</i>	Courses of stone
<i>Merḥāḍ</i>	<i>Marāḥīḍ</i>	Toilet/Bath-room

<i>Merkāz</i>	<i>Marākīz</i>	High wooden-sofa
<i>Minwar</i>	<i>Manāwer</i>	Light-well
<i>Mizāb</i>		Water-spout/gutter
<i>Mu' akhkhar</i>	<i>Mu' ākhīr</i>	Rear-room
<i>Murabba ' </i>	<i>Murabba 'āt</i>	Square (shape)
<i>Murakkab</i>	<i>Murkkabāt</i>	Kitchen
<i>Naqir</i>		Carving/ornamentation
<i>Naqsh</i>	<i>Noqūsh</i>	Engraving/ornament
<i>Nidjāf</i>	<i>Nudjouf</i>	Frames/standards
<i>'Ottah</i>	<i>'Ottat</i>	Termites
<i>'Ozlah</i>	<i>'Ozl</i>	Private area/room A house (Makkan dialect)
<i>Qā 'ah</i>	<i>Qā 'āt/qīyya ' </i>	Hall/lounge
<i>Qaşabah</i>	<i>Qşabāt</i>	Tube/Pipe
<i>Qabū</i>	<i>Aqbiyyah</i>	Cellar
<i>Rāss al-dumāgh</i>	<i>Rūss</i>	Top of the head/stone
<i>Roukon</i>	<i>Arkān</i>	Corner
<i>Rowshān</i>	<i>Rawāshīn</i>	Bay-window (Ḥedjāzī dialect)
<i>Saqf</i>	<i>Asquf</i>	Ceiling
- <i>Saqf ghashīm/ 'aiyydī</i>		Ordinary/simple ceiling
- <i>Saqf makhşūş</i>		Distinctive/special ceiling
- <i>Saqf shāmī</i>		Syrian/Damascene style ceiling
- <i>Saqf shaṭarandj</i>		Checkerboard ceiling (decoration pattern)
- <i>Saqf wasaṭ/baṣṭ</i>		Moderate/flat ceiling
<i>Şāloūn</i>	<i>Şawālīn</i>	Lounge/sitting room
<i>Sedjniyyah</i>	<i>Sadjāiyyin</i>	Matresses covering the <i>merkāz</i>
<i>Şehrīdj</i>	<i>Şahārīdj</i>	Water-tank
<i>Shābūrah</i>		Roof parapets (brick screens)
<i>Shaib</i>		Cloth water-pipe
<i>Shīsh</i>	<i>Shīshān</i>	Blind/shutter/lattice window



<i>Shubbāk</i>	<i>Shbābik</i>	Window
<i>Sinnah</i>	<i>Sonūn</i>	Stair-riser
<i>Şuffah</i>	<i>Şufaff</i>	Ante-room
<i>Suṭūḥ</i>	<i>Asṭoḥ</i>	Roof top
<i>Ṭahārah</i>	<i>Ṭahhārāt</i>	Water-closet
<i>Ṭāqah</i>	<i>Ṭīyyaq</i>	Window
<i>Wadjh</i>	<i>Widjīh</i>	Side/facade

### Building materials and tools

<i>‘Arḍah</i>	<i>‘Awāriḍ</i>	Lintel
<i>Adjār</i>	<i>Adjūr</i>	Coloured/baked-bricks used as parapets in terraces
<i>Balāṭah</i>	<i>Balāṭ</i>	Tile
<i>-Balāṭ Kiddān</i>		Lime-tiles used in staircases
<i>Bandjah soudāh</i>		Black-plaster/mud
<i>Baṭḥāh</i>		Sand
<i>Bitrah</i>	<i>Bittar</i>	Wooden-beams/courses of stone
<i>Bolokah</i>	<i>Bolokkāt</i>	Brick
<i>-Bolokat ṭīn</i>		Adobe/sun-dried mud-bricks
<i>Da ‘āmḥ</i>	<i>Da ‘āmāt</i>	Buttresses
<i>-Da ‘āmat ḥadjar</i>		Stone-support
<i>Dabsh</i>		Rubble
<i>Dafīn</i>	<i>Dufunn</i>	Buried/weight-distributer
<i>Daiyyrah</i>	<i>Dawāyyer</i>	Circle
<i>Dossor</i>	<i>Dossor</i>	Nails
<i>Ḥadjar</i>	<i>Aḥdjār</i>	Stone
<i>-Ḥadjar al- ‘aqd</i>		Stone of the arch: voussoir

-Ḥadjar baḥarī		Madrepore
-Ḥadjar baladī/asmar		Black mountain-stone
-Ḥadjar ḥarāwī		Lava-stones
-Ḥadjar kāshoūr		Small coral-rocks
-Ḥadjar manqabī		Coralline limestone
-Ḥadjar manḥūt		Ornamented stones/ashlars
-Ḥadjar qāḥūd		Fine-crushed stones
-Ḥadjar simaismī		Porous sedimentary limestone
-Ḥadjar zarāiyyqī		Smooth volcanic-stone/basalt
Ḥalq	Ḥolūq	Throat/frame
-Ḥalq al-bāb		Door-frame
Ḥaṣīrah	Ḥuṣur	Raft-foundation
Ḥashwah	Ḥashwāt	Filling material (crushed-stones)
Ḥizām	Aḥzimah	Belt = connector of <i>rawāshīn</i>
Jadrowah/Jedār	Judrān	Walls/fence
Jarīdah	Jarīd	Palm-leaf stalks
Kitf	Aktāff	Shoulder/corner
-Kitf al-ḥadjar		Shoulders/columns of stone
Kordjah	Kordjāt	A lot of 20 wooden beams
Khashabah	Akhshāb	Wood/lumber
-Khashab ‘ar‘ar		A type of wood from Sudan
-Khashab Dūm		Palm-wood brought from Taif
-Khashab ḥūr		Poplar/A type of wood
-Khashab hindī		Indian-teak/oak
-Khashab jandal/qandal		Indian-wood
-Khashab Jāwī/funniyy		Javan-wood
-Khashab Kharṭ		Turned wooden motifs of the rowshān grills
-Khasab mandjūr/manqūr		Woodwork/ornamented-wood
-Khashab sādī		Indian-teak
-Khashab tamr		Palm-wood
-Khashab zān		Beech: red and white
Kushah		Oven for backing mud/red-bricks

<i>Lisān</i>	<i>Alsinah</i>	Tongue/projection
<i>-Lisān al-ṭāqah</i>		Tongue/support of the window
<i>Loah</i>	<i>Alwāḥ</i>	Wooden-boards
<i>-Alwāḥ al-hindi</i>		Indian-oak boards
<i>Mashah</i>	<i>Masahāt</i>	An iron-try for mortar mixing
<i>Medmāk</i>	<i>Madāmīk</i>	Courses of stone
<i>Misṭarina</i>	<i>Misṭarīnāt</i>	A smoothing tool for plastering
<i>Mūnah</i>		Mortar
<i>Mughrī</i>		Glue
<i>Mughrass</i>	<i>Maghāress</i>	Wooden-insert
<i>-Mughrass Jāwīl/sāmūr</i>		Javan wooden-inserts
<i>Murabba ‘</i>	<i>Murabba ‘āt</i>	Square (shape)
<i>Musmār</i>	<i>Masāmīr</i>	Nail
<i>Mustaṭīl</i>	<i>Mustaṭīlāt</i>	Rectangle
<i>Muthallath</i>	<i>Muthallathāt</i>	Triangle
<i>Naqir</i>		Carving/ornamentation
<i>Naqsh</i>	<i>Noqūsh</i>	Engraving/ornament
<i>Nidjaf</i>	<i>Nudjouf</i>	Frames/standards
<i>Nūrah</i>		Lime-powder
<i>Nuqolah</i>	<i>Noqoll</i>	Small stones
<i>Nkhlah</i>	<i>Nakhīl</i>	Palm tree
<i>-Nakhīl al-dūm</i>		Doum-Palm from Taif
<i>Qadūm</i>	<i>Qawādīm</i>	Stone-adze
<i>Qalbah</i>	<i>Qalbāt</i>	Courses of stone
<i>Qālib</i>	<i>Qālib</i>	Mold
<i>Quffah</i>	<i>Quffaff</i>	Palm-frond basket for carrying mortar
<i>Rāfa ‘ah</i>	<i>Rawāfi ‘</i>	Pulley
<i>Rahmāniyyah</i>	<i>Rahmāniyyāt</i>	Plastering-scaffolds
<i>Rashshāqqah</i>	<i>Rashshāqāt</i>	Hooks for fixing <i>rawāhīn</i> to façade
<i>Rodoff</i>		walls of wooden-posts
<i>Roukon</i>	<i>Arkān</i>	Corner

<i>Sa 'afah</i>	<i>Sa 'af</i>	Palm-fronds
<i>Sabakhah</i>	<i>Sabakhāt</i>	Saline-sand
<i>Shakil</i>	<i>Ashkāl</i>	Shape/form
<i>Sigālah</i>	<i>Sigālāt</i>	Scaffolding
<i>Sisān ṭabi 'iyyah</i>		Natural/direct-foundations
<i>Ta 'llīqah</i>	<i>Ta 'ālīq</i>	Upstanding supports/braces
<i>Ṭabaq</i>	<i>Aṭbāq</i>	Mold
<i>Taklilah</i>	<i>Taklīlāt</i>	Strap/tie/weight-distributors
<i>Takhlīlah</i>	<i>Takhlīlāt</i>	Insertion
<i>Taglīlah</i>	<i>Taglīlāt</i>	Weight-distributors/reducer
<i>Ṭīn/Lebin</i>		Mud
<i>-ṭīn dībs</i>		Thick-mud
<i>-Ṭīn dohiyyinah</i>		Greasy/pasty-mud
<i>-Ṭīn ḥilow</i>		Pure-mud
<i>-Ṭīn sabakh</i>		Saline mud-paste
<i>-Ṭīnah soudah</i>		Flood/black-mud
<i>Ṭūbah</i>	<i>Ṭūb</i>	Brick
<i>-Ṭūb aḥmar</i>		Red-brick
<i>-Ṭūb ramlī</i>		Sand/soft-brick
<i>Ṭourfah</i>		8 meters long wooden posts
<i>Tarbī'ah</i>	<i>Tarābī'</i>	Square-cut stone-tiles
<i>'Ūd</i>	<i>'Īdān</i>	Wooden-post/pole
<i>- 'Īdān karfah</i>		Thin & flexible wooden-poles
<i>Yadd</i>	<i>Ayādī</i>	Hands: wooden-beams
<i>Wadjh</i>	<i>Wodjīh</i>	Side/façade
<i>Watar</i>	<i>Awtār</i>	String
<i>Zaharah</i>		Blue-nūrah/ultramarine

## Measurements

<i>Banān</i>	<i>Banānāt</i>	Fingers
<i>Hinch</i>	<i>Hinchāt</i>	Inches
<i>Giddah</i>	<i>Giddad</i>	58 cm - 60 cm = $\pm 18$ giraṭ [karat]
<i>Gīrāṭ</i>	<i>Grārīṭ</i>	3 cm - 3.3 cm
<i>Mukhzan</i>	<i>Makhāzen</i>	Superficial module used in Al-Madinah: one <i>mukhzan</i> = $\pm 42$ m <sup>2</sup>
<i>Nuṣṣ</i>	<i>Anṣāṣ</i>	Half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ )
<i>Rub</i> ‘	<i>Arbā</i> ‘	Quarter ( $\frac{1}{4}$ )
<i>Sinnah</i>	<i>Asnān/sonūn</i>	Riser = 4 bananat = $\pm 3$ inch
<i>Thalāth arbā</i> ‘		Three quarters ( $\frac{3}{4}$ )
<i>Thulth</i>	<i>Athlātt</i>	One third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ )
<i>Zerā</i> ‘ <i>mi</i> ‘ <i>mārī</i> - ‘ <i>Ūd</i> / ‘ <i>aṣāt al-mu</i> ‘ <i>allem</i>	<i>Azru</i> ‘	Cubit = $\pm 24$ karat = 75 cm - 80 cm

## People and professions

<i>Adjnabī</i>	<i>Adjānib</i>	Foreigner/non-Ḥedjāzī
- <i>Afrandjī</i>		Non-Arab/non-Muslim
<i>Amīr</i>	‘ <i>Ūmarā</i> ‘	Prince
‘ <i>Āmel</i>	‘ <i>Ommāl</i>	Workman/aid/servant
‘ <i>Ammī</i>	<i>A</i> ‘ <i>māmī</i>	Uncle/master/senior
‘ <i>Ā</i> ‘ <i>ilah</i>	‘ <i>Awā</i> ‘ <i>il</i>	Extended family
‘ <i>Āzib</i>	‘ <i>Ozzāb</i>	Unmarried
‘ <i>Aiyyan</i>	<i>A</i> ‘ <i>aiyyān</i>	Prominant families

<i>'Frīt</i>	<i>'Fārīt</i>	Evil spirit (devil)
<i>'Ssah</i>	<i>'Sass</i>	Night-watchmen
<i>Bakhlī</i>	<i>Bukhalā'</i>	Stingy
<i>Bannā'</i>	<i>Bannāīn</i>	Builder
<i>Fallātī</i>	<i>Fallātīn</i>	Trainee/apprentice
<i>Garārī</i>	<i>Garāriyyah</i>	Masonry carver/engraver
<i>Ghūl</i>	<i>Ghīlān</i>	Evil spirit (devil)
<i>Ḥadād</i>	<i>Ḥaddādīn</i>	Blacksmith
<i>Ḥaddjār</i>	<i>Ḥaddjārīn</i>	Stone-cutter/carver
<i>Ḥakawāti</i>	<i>Ḥakawātiyyah</i>	Story-teller
<i>Ḥāwāirī</i>	<i>Ḥāwāirīyyah</i>	Commoners
<i>Ḥasid</i>	<i>Ḥussād</i>	Covetous
<i>Ḥedjāzī</i>	<i>Ḥudjūz</i>	A person from Ḥedjāz
	<i>Ḥedjāziyyīn</i>	
<i>Iblīs</i>	<i>Abālisah</i>	Demon/devil
<i>'Imām</i>	<i>A'imah</i>	Prayer-leader
<i>Jinnī</i>	<i>Jinn</i>	Ghosts/spirits
<i>Khallāt</i>	<i>Khallātīn</i>	Mortar-mixer
<i>Mināwel</i>	<i>Mināwlīn</i>	Stone/mortar-porter/hauler
<i>Mu'allem</i>	<i>Mu'allemīn</i>	Master-builder
<i>Mubaiyyed</i>	<i>Mubaiyyidīn</i>	Painter/plaster
<i>Murawwidj</i>	<i>Murawwidjīn</i>	Assistant mason
<i>Nadjār</i>	<i>Nadjārīn</i>	Carpenter
<i>Naḥḥāt</i>	<i>Naḥḥātīn</i>	Stone-engraver
<i>Nazzāḥ</i>	<i>Nazzāḥīn</i>	Sewage-cleaner/nightman/bailer
<i>Nawwār</i>	<i>Nawwārah</i>	Painter/plasterer
	<i>Nawwārīn</i>	



<i>-Naḥḥāt</i>	<i>Naḥḥātīn</i>	
<i>-Naqqāsh</i>	<i>Naqqāshīn</i>	
<i>-Mulaiyyis</i>	<i>Mulaiyyisīn</i>	
<i>-Mubaiyyid</i>	<i>Mubaiyyidīn</i>	
<i>‘Omdah</i>	<i>‘Omad</i>	<i>Ḥara</i> leader
<i>‘Otmānlī</i>	<i>‘Otmānlīn</i>	Turks of Egypt
<i>Qabīlah</i>	<i>Qabā’ il</i>	Kin-group
<i>Raiyyis</i>	<i>Ro’ assā’</i>	Chief/president
<i>Rā’ ī al- ‘arḍ</i>		Owner of the land
<i>Ṣabī</i>	<i>Ṣobiyyān</i>	Apprentice/workman/aid/servant
<i>Saqqā</i>	<i>Saqqāiyyīn</i>	Water-bearer/carrier
<i>Saiyyed</i>	<i>Sādah</i>	Honourable for being a descendent of the Prophet’s (PBBH) family. They are natives of Makkah
<i>Ṣanāi’ ī</i>	<i>Ṣanāi’ aiyyah</i>	Craftsmen
<i>Sīdī</i>	<i>Asiyyādī</i>	Grandfather/master
<i>Shalāwī</i>	<i>Shalāwiyyah</i>	Commoners
<i>Shaqāwī</i>	<i>Shaqāwiyyah</i>	Hard-working/building-crew
<i>Sharīf</i>	<i>Ashrāff</i>	Governor (Ottoman-appointed)
<i>Sheikh</i>	<i>Shioūkh</i>	Old-man/leader
<i>-Sheikh al-mu’ allemīn</i>		Leader of master-builders
<i>Sittī</i>		Grandmother/mistress
<i>Ṭiyyān</i>	<i>Ṭiyyānīn</i>	Mortar-mixer
<i>-Khallāṭ</i>	<i>Khallāṭīn</i>	Mortar-mixer
<i>Ṭefel</i>	<i>Aṭfāl</i>	Children
<i>Turkī</i>	<i>Atrākk</i>	Turkish
<i>Walī</i>	<i>Woulāt</i>	District-governor (Turkish)
<i>Zabūn</i>	<i>Zabāiyyen</i>	Client

## Money and currency

<i>Dīnār</i>	<i>Danānīr</i>	Early Arabian currency $\approx$ £ 2 today.
<i>Garsh/qarsh</i>	<i>Qūrūsh</i>	Piaster = 0.20 riyal $\approx$ £ 0.030 today.
<i>Jinaiḥ/Jinaiḥ dahab</i> <i>-Jinaiḥ Afrandjī</i>	<i>Jinaiḥāt</i>	Guinea = an English gold coin issued from 1663 to 1813 and fixed in 1717 as the equivalent of 21 shillings. It was equivalent to 22 karat from which guineas were coined. A guinea also refers to the Saudi Arabian sovereign which was first issued in 1951
<i>-Jinaiḥ Maṣrī</i>		Golden Egyptian Pound $\approx$ 1.3 Golden English Pounds of the year 1910/1330 AH $\approx$ 100 qarsh Maṣrī $\approx$ £ 50 today.
<i>-Jinaiḥ dahab 'Ottmānlī</i>		Golden Turkish Pounds (value unknown)
<i>-Jinaiḥ Jordj/sharak</i>		A British half crown/guinea bearing the image of St. George $\approx$ 7-10 silver riyal $\approx$ 4.6 riyal $\approx$ 250 Saudi riyal today $\approx$ £ 38.5 today's value.
<i>Qerṭās</i>	<i>Qarāṭīs</i>	One riyal = <i>Qerṭās</i> = 20 piasters.
<i>Rubiyyah</i>		An indian currancy common in Makkah $\approx$ 5 riyal (1820 AD) $\approx$ 13 annus $\approx$ 1.88 shilling $\approx$ 0.7 English Golden pound.
<i>-Robiyyah Jāwī</i>		A Javan currency (value unknown).
<i>Riyāl</i>	<i>Riyālāt</i>	Also known as Rix Dollar $\approx$ 2 shillings and 6 d. (1820 AD).
<i>-Riyyāl Su 'ūdī</i>		Saudi Currency 1 riyal = 20 piasters $\approx$ £ 0.65
<i>-Riyāl Madjīdī/fīḍah</i>		Monetary unit used under the Turks = 1 silver riyal $\approx$ 10 riyals $\approx$ £ 3.8 today's value.

## Furniture and utensils

<i>Dikkah</i>	<i>Dikkāk</i>	Wooden seat
<i>Fatiyyah</i>		Cloth-chest
<i>Ḥaṣīrah</i>	<i>Ḥaṣīr</i> <i>Ḥuṣur/Aḥṣīrah</i>	Straw-carpet
<i>Ibrīq</i>	<i>Abārīq</i>	Long-spouted ewer
<i>Jazwah</i>	<i>Jazwāt</i>	Water-boiler
<i>Karāwītah</i>	<i>Karāwīt</i>	High wooden-sofa
<i>Lifah</i>	<i>Aliyyāf</i>	Fibres of palm-tree for bathing (scrubbing).
<i>Liyyānah</i>	<i>Liyyānāt</i>	Mattress
<i>Masnad</i>	<i>Masānid</i>	Back-support
<i>Mirwaḥa</i>	<i>Marāwiḥ</i>	Hand-held fan
<i>Mūghrāf</i>	<i>Māghārīf</i>	Metal-bowl
<i>Rakkālah</i>	<i>Rakkālāt</i>	Cloth-chest
<i>Raff</i>	<i>Rufūf/arfuff</i>	Shelves
<i>Sāmūr</i>	<i>Samāwir</i>	Water-boiler
<i>Saḥḥārah</i>	<i>Saḥḥārāt</i> <i>Saḥāḥīr</i>	Cupboards
<i>Saisam</i>		Cloth-chest
<i>Sudjādah</i>	<i>Sudjād</i>	Carpet
<i>Ṭurāḥah</i>	<i>Ṭarārīḥ</i>	Mattress
<i>Zīr</i>	<i>Aziyyār</i>	Water-container
<i>-Zīr mughrabī</i>		From Morocco

## Expressions used in construction

*Aqṣā istiḡamah le- 'ūd al-tasqīf*: The maximum resistance of bending moments for wooden poles.

*'Aṣī*: Edge/narrow side of a wooden board.

*Ashkāl men demaghoh*: Shapes from his head= unconventional/unprecedented forms.

*Baṭīḥ*: Flat/wide side of a wooden board.

*Būniyyān shāmī*: construction style/method after Levantine (Syrian) craftsmen: alternate rows of stone/bricks and wooden-beams.

*Fannān*: Artist/expert

*Ḥalawān*: Gratuity or gift of appraisal.

*Ḥāmīl wa maḥmūl*: Load-bearing and load-borne.

*Ḥaniyyāt*: Bending moments.

*Inba 'adj*: Buckling/flambement.

*Junub*: Hard and large (for stones).

*Maiyyalah*: Deviation of walls.

*Nisayyidj al- 'qd*: Make the frame of the arch.

*No 'qod fam al- 'qd*: Tie the mouth = horsing-up and deciding the shape of the arch.

*Noqūsh*: Ornamentation/engravings

*Qarṣ/Tariyyīḥ*: Settlement of the structure.

***Qiṭ'ah naḍīfah:*** A sharp-edged stone/finely-cut stone.

***Rafa' yadouh:*** Finished his task/construction duties.

***Raiyyah/Wghaz/Māl:*** Settled, subsided or inclined (for the structure).

***Raṣd al-sisān:*** Foundation balancing/determine.

***Ramramah/Tarmīm:*** Restoration.

***Roiyyasāt:*** Small and fine (for stone finishing).

***Shāmī wa baḥarī:*** (North and West) = towards Syria and the sea.(For identifying elevations/directions).

***Shāqūf:*** Rough/basic cut (for stones-finishing).

***Tashaqūq:*** Cracking.

***Ṭalqī:*** Removing buckled stones.

***Ta'dīl wadḥ:*** Rough/basic-cut (for stones-finishing).

***Taghiyyrāt khaffāfī:*** Minor modification/alterations.

***Ta'līq:*** Suspension technique.

***Tahzīm al-bait:*** Tie the house with a waistband (braces).

***Takhmūr:*** Fermentation of mortar-mix.

***Tamtīr al-bait:*** Measuring the house/approval of sizes.

***Tarbī' al-maḥīl:*** Squaring the room/ascertain of right angles.

***Tasbīl balāṭ/Biyyād/Tadjšīš:*** Covering with tiles and mortar.

***Tasqif ghashīm/ 'Āiyydī:*** Ordinary/simple ceiling.

***Tasqif makhṣūṣ:*** Distinctive/special ceiling.

***Tasqif shāmī:*** Syrian/Damascene style ceiling.

***Tasqif shaṭarandj:*** Checkerboard ceiling (decoration pattern).

***Tasqif wasaṭ/Basṭ:*** Moderate/flat ceiling.

***Ta 'bīd:*** Grade/build up the land.

***Wadjh gharbī:*** Western elevation/side.

***Yibān men Jadrouatouh:*** Judged by alignment of his walls = the quality of construction or structure.

***Yī'adilou:*** To change/modify.

***Yiṭoq:*** To break (for roofing supports).

## **The building process**

**1- *Al-Bedāiyyah:*** Initiation.

**2- *Talbīq al-'arḍ/Fiṣlat al-bait:*** Matching the land and the house-image/  
tailoring the house.

**3- *Al-qabūl:*** Acceptance/agreement.

**4- *Raṣd al-sīsān/Hāfer al-assāsāt:*** Foundation layout.

**5- *Raṣṣ al-ḥadjar:*** Brickwork/brick-laying.

**6- *Raf' al-binā'/Baqīyyat al-adwār:*** Typical floor construction.



7- *Al-liyyāsah/al-Bīyyād/al-Tangīl*: Plastering/painting.

8- *Tarkīb al-abwāb, al-rawāshīn wa al-shīshān*: Installation of doors, windows, blinds and wooden parapets.

9- *Taslīm al-bait*: Presenting/submitting the house to the client.

10- *Taosī' al-bait/Ziyādat al-bait*: Extension of the house.

11- *Ta 'līq al-bait*: Suspending the structure of the house.

### Formal/Legal institutions

*'qd*: Contract.

*Asbaqiyyah*: Right/priority (to build or open windows).

*Ḥammil alā jārack*: Charge your loads on/or load your weight on the neighbouring house (common load-bearing walls).

*Ḥārāwīyyah*: Exaggerated protectiveness (privacy control).

*'Ittifāq*: Contract/agreement

*Jam 'iyyah*: Tribunal (The building guild judicial system).

*Kashfiyyah*: Inspection (building regulation enforcement by the leader of the building guild and the local judge or *'omdah*).

*Kollanā amānāt ba 'aḍ*: We - the Ḥedjāzies - are all the custody, the trust, and the guardians of each other. Your faith will not be completed until you wish for your brother what you wish for yourself.

*Mertāḥah*: Comfortably = opening windows in confined areas without harming others.

***Odjrat jiwādah/Mudjāwadah:*** Client-builder lump-sum contract.

***Odjrah yaūmiyyah:*** Client-builder daily-instalments contract.

***Raf' al-ḡarar:*** Alleviate the harm (after a complaint is raised to the judge).

***Taqālīd al-ḥāra:*** Traditions of the neighbourhood.

***Tarāḡī:*** Agreement/treaty through which the community members can waive formal building regulations.

***Ṭarīq:*** Give-way.

***Yāsāter/Dastūr:*** Oh you who protects and cover = a name of God. These words were called loudly by visitors to draw the attention of the female members of the family to the arrival of strangers or guests: *Dastūr ya aḥil al-bait:* Permission, ye dwellers of the house.

***Ḥabaqat:*** Grades of craftsmen and *mu'allemin* (ranks of superiority by experience).

### Other related expressions

***ʿIn al-ḥasūd:*** The evil eye of a covetous person.

***Fā'l:*** Omen.

***Ḥidjāb:*** Amulet, written charms to counteract or preserve from enchantment.

***Al-Hind wa al-Zindj:*** Towards India and towards southern Ethiopia.

***Inshā'Allāh:*** If God Wills/If it be the Will of God. Said before mentioning future acts.

***Mashā' Allāh:*** Praise be to God (a blessing for the protection from envious or evil

eyes: especially said upon entering the house or encountering a new of beautiful thing).

**Rawḥānī:** Spiritual.

**Zall:** Passed-by.

### **The *mu'allemin*'s code of practice**

**'Itgān/'Ikmāl:** Proper completion, fulfilment, precision;

**'Amānah/Ṣidg:** Faithfulness, loyalty, honesty;

**'Ikhḷāṣ/Ḥerṣ/Mutāba'ah/Tadgīg:** Sincerity, follow-up, quality-control;

**Nashāt/Himmah/Muthābarah:** Industriousness, persistence;

**'Ishrāk/'Istishārah:** Consultation, involvement, sympathy;

**Al-ḥirṣ 'alā mashā'ir al-nās:** Caring about, courtesy to others;

**Tanḍīm al-'amāl/Takhḍīṭ 'alā ilmadā al-ba'id:** Organization, long-term planning;

**'Iḥsās/Zoug/Tadjmīl:** Feeling, sensitivity, beautification;

**Ṣiyyānah/Ramramah/Tadjdīd:** Maintenance, renovation;

**Twāzūn kā twāzūn al-'insān:** Equilibrium, balance as that of man.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

The Western Region and the Red Sea. British Naval Intelligence Publication Division, 1946.

America and the Middle East; Partners in the Next Decade. Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., 1950.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary. 3 vols. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1981.

Aba Al-Khail, Abdul Aziz. Description of Arabic Majlis in Qur'an and Prophet Tradition (Sunnah). AlBenaa. 1988. 7.

'Afif family. Tape-Recorded/Pen-and-notebook formal interviews, Jeddah: Saudi Arabia, March 12-13, 1990.

Al-Anṣārī, 'Abdul Quddūs. Mausū'at Tārīkh Madīnat Jeddah. [(Arabic) The Encyclopedia of the History of the City of Jeddah]. Cairo: Dār Miṣr Liḷḡiba'ah, 1982. (First published 1963).

Al-Farsy, Fouad. Saudi Arabia: A Case Study in Development. London: KPI, 1986.

Al-Maghrabī, M. 'Alī. Malāmiḥ El Ḥayāt Al Edītimā'īyyah Fī El Hejāz. [(Arabic) Aspects of the Ḥedjāzī Social Life]. Jeddah: Tihamah, 1982.

Al-Makkī family. Tape-Recorded/Pen-and-notebook interviews, Jeddah: Saudi Arabia, May 18-19, 1990.

Al-Sibā'ī, Aḥmad. Tarīq Makkah. [(Arabic) Makkah Road]. 2nd ed. Makkah: Dār Qūraish Press, 1960.

Alexander, Christopher. "Major Changes in Environmental Form Required by Social and Psychological Demands." Cities Fit to Live in. Ed. Walter McQuade. New York: Macmillan Co., 1971.

Ali, Yusuf A. The Holy Qur'ān: Text Translation and Commentary. USA: The American Trust Publication, 1977.

Allen, Barbara, and Lynwood Montell. From Memory to History: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research. Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1981.

Altman, Irwin, Carol Werner, and Diana Oxley. "Temporal Aspects of Homes: A transactional Perspective." Home Environments. Ed. Irwin Altman and Carol Werner. 9 vols. Human Behaviour and Environments. New York: Plenum Press, 1985.

Anderson, Stanford. Conventions of Form and Conventions of Use in Urban Social Space: an Extract. Ekistics. 1980.

Angawi, Sami M. Makkan Architecture. Unpublished Dissertation. University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1988.

Antoniou, Jim. Islamic Cities and Conservation. Switzerland: Unesco Press, 1981.

Azzi, Robert. Saudi Arabian Portfolio. Switzerland: First Azimuth Ltd., 1978.

Bā'ishin, M. Şāliḥ. "*Muzakarāt Shakhṣīyyah*." Mawsū'at Tārīkh Madinat Jeddah. [(Arabic) A Personal Autobiography. The Encyclopedia of the History of the City of Jeddah]. Ed. 'Abdul Quddūs al-Anṣārī. Cairo: Dār Miṣr Liḷṭibā'ah, 1982.

Ballard, Edward G. "The Visual Perception of Distance." Phenomenology in Perspective. Ed. F.J. Smith. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970.

Beaumart, P., and G. Blake. The Middle East: A Geographical Study. London: John Wiley & Sons, 1976.



Berger, Peter. The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Berger, P., B. Berger, and H. Kellner. The Homeless Mind. England: Penguin, 1974.

Blier, Suzanne Preston. The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architecture Expression. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

-----". "Moral Architecture: Beauty and Ethics in Batammaliba Building Design." Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives. Ed. Jean-Paul Bourdier and Nezar Alsayyad. New York: The University Press of America, 1989.

Bohumil, Amjad. Determinants of Islamic Architecture. Zurich: MARP, 1988.

Bokhari, Abdulla Yahia. Jeddah: A Study in Urban Formation. Unpublished Dissertation. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA, 1978.

Bonta, Juan. Architecture and its Interpretation. London: Lund Humphries, 1979.

Bourdieu, Pierre. Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Broadbent, Geoffrey, Richard Bunt, and Charles Jencks. Signs, Symbols and Architecture. New York: John Wiley And Sons, 1980.

Brown, Leon Carl., ed. From Madina to Metropolis: Heritage and Change in the Near Eastern City. New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1973.

Burckhardt, John Lewis. Travels in Arabia. 1968 ed. Cambridge: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1829.

-----". Bedouins and Wahabys: Proverbs and travels in the Hejaz. 3 vols. London: Colburn and Bentley, 1830.

Burgess, Ernest W., and Harrey J. Locke. The Family: From Institution to Companionship. New York: American Books, 1953.

Burton, Richard. Pilgrimage to El-Medina and Mecca. 3 vols. London: Longman, 1855.

Butterfield, Jan. "On Place and Space." The House that Art Built. Fullerton, U.S.A: The California State University, 1983.

Buttimer, Ann, and David Seamon, ed. The Human Experience of Space and Place. London: Croom Helm, 1980.

Cebeci, Numan N. The Muslim Environment: Its Evolution, Change and Adaptation. Proceedings of a Symposium on Preservation of Islamic Architectural Heritage. Istanbul, Turkey: Arab Urban Development Institute, 1985.

Child, Arthur. Interpretations: A General Theory. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.

Cole, Donald P. "Bedouin and Social Change in Saudi Arabia." Arab Society: Social Sciences Perspective. Ed. Saad Eddin Ibrahim. Cairo: The American University Press, 1985.

Cooper, Clare. "The House as Symbol of the Self." Environmental Psychology: People and Their Physical Settings. Ed. Harold M. Proshansky. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., and E. Rochberg-Halton. The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Daunton, M. House and Home in the Victorian City: Working Class Housing 1885-1914. London: Edward Arnold, 1983.

De Quincy, Quatèrmère. "A Definition of Imitation." Imitation and Innovation in Architectural Design. Ed. Lucien Steil. New York: Academy Editions/St.Martin's Press, 1988.

Dickens, Charles. "The Life of Our Lord." Associated Newspapers vol.14 (1934).

Didier, Charles. Sojourn With the Grand Sharief of Makkah. London: The Oleander Press., 1985.

Doughty, C.M. Arabia Deserta. Cambridge: [n.p], 1937, (first published 1888).

Dovey, Kimberly. "Home and Homelessness." Home Environment. Ed. Irwin Altman and Carol Werner. 9 vols. New York: Plenum Press, 1985.

-----, "The Quest for Authenticity and the Replication of Environmental Meaning." Dwelling, Place and Environment. Ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

El Mallakh, Ragaei. Saudi Arabia Rush to Development. London: Croom Helm, 1982.

El-Hage, Badr. Saudi Arabia: Images From the Past. London: Riad Al-Rayyes, 1989.

El-Wakil, Abdul Wahid. "Identity, Tradition and Architecture." Arab Architecture Past and Present. Ed. Antony Hutt. Durham: Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 1984.

Eliade, Mircea. Patterns in Comparative Religion. London: Sheed and Ward, 1958.

-----, The Sacred and the Profane. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959.

Elyas, Abdul Jabbar. Harat al-Aghawat Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah: An Energy Conserving Islamic Town in Saudi Arabia. Proceedings of the Second International Plea Conference on Passive and Low Energy Architecture. Ed. Simous Yannas. Greece: 1983.

Ewen, Stuart. Captions of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.

Eyuce, Ahmet T. Solid and Void Relationship in the Traditional Architecture of the Western Region. Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, [n.d].

Faden, Yousef. Traditional Houses of Makkah: The Influence of Socio-cultural Themes Upon Arab Muslim Dwellings. Proceedings of the Symposium on Islamic Architecture and Urbanism. Ed. Aydin Germen. Dammam/Saudi Arabia: King Faisal University, 15-10 January 1980.

Farsi, Said. Jeddah: A Changing Eco-System. The Municipality of Jeddah, 1982.

Fathy, Hassan. Architecture for the Poor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973.

Fisher, W.B. The Middle East. London: E.P.Dutton & Co., 1950.

-----, A Physical, Social and Regional Geography. London: Methun & Co., Ltd., 1978.

Foster, John. The Life of Charles Dickens. 2 vols. London: Dent, 1969.

Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." Standard Editions of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Froude. Ed. Strachey James. 24 vols. London: Hogarth, 1981. 17.

Fromm, Erich. Escape From Freedom. New York: Avon, 1969.

Gabrieli, Francesco. The Arab Revival. London: Thames and Hudson, 1961.

Gallion, Arthur B., and Simon Eisner. The Urban Pattern. New York: D.V.Nostrand Co., 1963.

George, Simmel. "The Stranger." On Individuality and Social Forms. Ed. Donald N. Levine. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971.

Gibb, Hamilton. Mohammednism. New York: Mentor Books, 1958.

Golany, Gidion. Design for Hot-Arid Regions. New York: V.N.R, 1983.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. The Home: Its Work and Influence. New York: Charlton Co., 1910.

Givoni, B. Man, Climate and Architecture. Amsterdam: Elsevier Publishing Co., 1959.

Glaser, Barney, and Anselm L. Strauss. The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays. New York: Basic, 1973.

Glasse, Cyril. The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam. London: Stacey Int., 1989.

Greenberg, Allan. "Thought on Freedom and Imitation." Imitation and Innovation in Architecture. Ed. Lucien Steil. New York: Academy Editions/St. Martin's Press, 1988.

Greenlaw, Jean-Pierre. The Coral Houses of Suakin. London, Stocksfield: Oriel Press, 1976.

Grillo, Paul Jacques. Form, Function and Design. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960.

Hall, Edward. Beyond Culture. New York: Anchor Books, 1976.

Hampate Ba, Cheikh Amadou. "The Living Tradition." General History of Africa. Ed. J. Ki-Zerbo. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Harman, Lesley D. The Modern Stranger: On Language and Membership. New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1956.

Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

-----, Poetry, Language and Thought. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

-----, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982.

Hill, Miriam Helen. "Bound to the Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Sightedness." Dwelling, Place and Environment. Ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Hitti, Philip. The History of the Arabs. London: McMillan & Co., Ltd, 1937.

Hobhouse, Leonard, G.C. Wheeler, and Morris Ginsburg. The Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simpler People. London: Chapman and Hall, 1930.

Hogarth, David. Hejaz Before World War I. New York: Falcon-Oleander, 1978.

Hopkins, Nicolas, and Saad Eddin Ibrahim, ed. Arab Society: Social Science Perspective. Cairo: The American University Press, 1985.

Huges, Evertt C. Social Change and Status Protease. Phylon. 1949. 10.

-----, "Dilemmas and Contradictions of Status." American Journal Of Sociology .55 (1949).

Hurgronje, Snouck C. Mekkah in the Latter Part of the 19th Century. Trans. J. H. Monahan. London: Luzac and Co., 1931.

Ibn Jubayr, Abu'l-Husayn. The Travels of Ibn Jubayr. London: Jonathan Cape, 1952.

Ibrahim, Saad. The New Arab Social Order: A Study of the Social Impact of Oil Wealth. London: Westview Press, 1982.

Illich, Ivan. Gender. New York: Pantheon, 1982.

Irwin, Altman, and Chermers Martin. Culture and Environment. London: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Ismail, Adel A. Origin, Ideology and Physical Patterns of Arab Urbanization. Ekistics. [n.d.]. 33.

Jager, Bernd. "Body, House, City: The Interlinings of Embodiment, Inhabitation and Civilization." Dwelling, Place and Environment. Ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Joma, Hesam A. S. The Earth As A Mosque. Unpublished dissertation. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA, 1991.



Jung, C.G. Memories, Dreams, Reflections. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Kay, Shirly, and Malin Basil. Saudi Arabia Past and Present. London: Narama Publications, 1979.

Keane, J.F. Six Month in the Hejaz. London: Ward and Downey, 1887.

Khan, Hasan-Uddin, and Charels Moore. The Architecture of the Individual House: Understanding the Models. Proceedings of an International Seminar on The Architecture of Housing: Exploring Architecture in Islamic Cultures. Ed. Robert Powell. Tanzania, Zanzibar: The African Union of Architects. The association of Architects of Tanzania. Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 12-15 October 1988.

Khan, Sultan. Jeddah Old Houses. Jeddah: National Centre for Science and Technology, 1984.

Kiernan, R.H. The Unveiling of Arabia: The Story of Arabian Travels and Discovery. London: George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd, 1937.

Kirkman, James S. The Arab City of Gedi: Excavations at the Great Mosque-Architecture and Finds. London: Oxford University Press, 1954.

Klapp, Orrin E. Collective Research for Identity. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

Klark, Kennth. Desert Housing. Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1980.

Kostof, Spiro, ed. The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Lackner, Helen. A Political Economy of Saudi Arabia. London: Ithaca Press, 1978.

Lamb, Charles. "That Home is Home Though it is Never so Homely." The Last Essays of Elia. 1964 ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1820.

Lang, Jon. Creating Architectural Theory: The Role of the Behavioral Sciences in Environmental Design. New York: V.N.R, 1987.

Lawrance, Roderick J. "Translating Anthropological Concepts Into Architectural Practice." Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective. Ed. Setha Law and Erve Chambers. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.

Lebkicher, Roy. Aramco and World Oil. New York: Russel F. Moore, 1952.

Lewcock, Roland. "Towns and Buildings in Arabia: North Yemen." Architecture Association Quarterly. 8:1 (1976).

Lewis, Bernard. The Middle East and the West. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964.

Lowth, C.T. The Wonder in Arabia. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1855.

Luchinger, Amolf. Structuralism in Architecture and Urban Planning. Stuttgart: Karl Verlag, 1980.

Lutfiyyah, Abdulah, and C. Churchill, ed. Readings in Arab Middle Eastern Societies and Cultures. Paris: Mouton, 1970.

Mālkī, Sulīmān 'Abdulghanī. Bilād Al Ḥedjāz Munz 'Ahd Al-Ashrāff. [(Arabic) The Land of Ḥedjāz since the era of al-Ashrāff]. Riyadh: Dārat Al-Malik 'Abdul 'Azīz Publications, 1983.

Michell, George. Architecture of the Islamic World. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

Mones, Hussain. Atlas of the History of Islam. Cairo: Al-Zahraa Arab Mass Media, 1987.

Mū 'allem karkāchīn, Ṣaḍāqah. Tape-Recorded/Pen-and-notebook formal interviews, Jeddah: Saudi Arabia, April 6-15, 1990.

*Mū'allem* 'Olaimī, Ṣaḍaqaḥ. Tape-Recorded/Pen-and-notebook formal interviews, Jeddah: Saudi Arabia, March 29-30, 1990.

*Mu'allem* al-Rīfī, Aḥmad Ḥamzah. Tape-Recorded/Pen-and-notebook formal interviews, Jeddah: Saudi Arabia, April 25-30, 1990.

Musil, Alois. The Northern Hejaz. New York: American Geographical Society, 1926.

Naṣīf, Ḥusain. Māḍī Al Hedjāz Wa Ḥadīruh. [(Arabic) Hedjāz Past and Present] Cairo: [n.p.], 1931.

Norberg-Schultz, Christian. Intentions in Architecture. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965.

Oakely, David. The Phenomenon of Architecture in Cultures in Change. New York: Pergamon Press, 1970.

Olgyay, Victor. Design With Climate. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Oliver, Paul. Shelter, Sign and Symbol. New York: The Overlook Press, 1980.

-----, "Handed Down Architecture: Tradition and Transmission." Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives. Ed. Jean-Paul Bourdier and Nezar Alsayyad. New York: University Press of America, 1989.

Packard, Vance. A Nation of Strangers. New York: McKay, 1972.

Pesce, A. Portrait of An Arabian City. Italy: Falcon Press, 1977.

Philby, John H. The Heart of Arabia. 2 vols. London: Constable and Co., 1922.

-----, A Pilgrimage in Arabia. London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1946.

-----, Arabian Highlands. New York: Cornell University Press, 1952.

Prussin, Labelle. "The Architecture of Nomadism: Gabra Place-Making and Culture." Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective. Ed. Setha Law and Erve Chambers. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.

Pye, David. The Nature of Design. London: Design Vesta, 1964.

Rapoport, Amos. "Cross-Cultural Aspects of Environmental Design." Culture and Environment. Ed. Irwin Altman, and Amos Rapoport. New York: Lenum Press, 1980.

-----, "Cross-Cultural Aspects of Environmental Design." Human Behavior and Environment: Advances in Theory and Research. Ed. Irwin Altman. New York: Plenum Press, 1980.

-----, "Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings." Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space. Ed. Susan Kent. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Raymond, André. The Great Arab Cities in the 16th and 18th Century: An Introduction. New York: New York University Press, 1984.

Relph, Edward. Place and Placelessness. London: Pion, 1976.

-----, "Geographical Experience and Being in the World." Dwelling, Place and Environment. Ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Riesman, David. The Lonely Crowd. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961.

Rihani, Ameen. Around the Coast of Arabia. London: Contable & Co., Ltd, 1930.

Robinson, Francis. Atlas of the Islamic World Since 1500. Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1987.

Roosevelt, Kermit. Arab, Oil and History. New York: Harper and Bros., 1949.

Rudofsky, Bernard. Architecture Without Architects. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964.

Ruskin, John. "Sesame and Lilies." The Works of John Ruskin. 39 vols. London: Allen, 1905.

Rutter, Eldon. The Holy Cities of Arabia. New York: G.P.Putman, 1930.

Saarinen, Eliel. The Search for Form in Art and Architecture. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1985.

Safak, Ali. Urbanism and Family Residence in Islamic Law. Ekistics. 1980.

Sanger, Richard H. The Arabian Peninsula. New York: Cornell University Press, 1954.

Seabrook, W.B. Adventures in Arabia. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1952.

Seamon, David. A Geography of the Life World. London: Croom Helm, 1979.

Seamon, David, and Robert Mugerauer, ed. Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Sikandar, The Begum of Bhopal: The Nawab. A Pilgrimage to Mecca. Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co., 1906.

Steil, Lucien. "On Imitation." Imitation and Innovation in Architecture. Ed. Steil Lucien. New York: Academy Editions/St.Martin's Press, 1988.

Stern, Robert. "Design as Emulation." Imitation and Innovation in Architecture. Ed. Lucien Steil. New York: Academy Editions/St.Martin's Press, 1988.

Stewart, Jean. The Arabs: Their History and Future. London: Paber and Paber, 1960.

Sweet, Louis E., ed. People and Cultures of the Middle East. New York: The Natural Historical Press, 1970.

Talib, Kaiser. Review of the Climatic Design Concepts and Details in Traditional Architecture in Various Climatic Zones in Saudi Arabia. Passive and Low Energy

Architecture: The Second International Plea Conference. Ed. Simous Yannas. Greece: 1983.

-----, Shelter in Saudi Arabia. London: Academy Press, 1984.

Telmisani, Abdullah, and Fuad Sarouji. Old Jeddah. Madird: OFFO, S.L., 1984.

Thomas, Bertram. The Arabs. London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1937.

Troeller, Gray. The Birth of Saudi Arabia. London: Frank Cass, 1976.

Trumbach, Randolph. The Rise of the Egalitarian Family. New York: Academic, 1978.

Turner, Ralph H. Family Interaction. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1970.

Twitchell, K.S. Saudi Arabia: With an Account of the Development of its Natural Resources. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1958.

Wagner, Helmut R., ed. On Phenomenology and Social Relations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Wagner, Philip. Environments and People. London: Prentice-Hall Int., Inc., 1972.

Walpole, Norman. Area Hand Book for Saudi Arabia. Washington, D.C.: The American University Press, 1971.

Warren, J. and I. Fethi. Traditional Houses in Baghdad. England: Coach Publishing House Ltd., 1982.

Wavell, A.J.B. A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca. London: Constable & Co., Ltd, 1912.

Wells, Alan. Social Institutions. London: Heinemann, 1970.

Wilson, Christopher. B. Architect and Community: Traditional Processes and Modern Products. 3rd Asian Congress of Architects. Seoul: University of Edinburgh, November 1988.



WoodForde, James. "The Dairy of a Country Parson." The Reverend James WoodForde. Ed. John Beresfor. 2 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1924. 2.

Wright, Julia McNair. The Complete Home. 1870 ed. Philadelphia: Bradley, Garreston, 1870.

Zakariya, Mona. Deux Palais Du Caire Medieval. Editions Du Centre National De La Recherche Scientifique. Paris: Quai Anatole, 1983.

Zanoni, Murray. Old Jeddah, An Impression. London: Arabian Homes Ltd., 1982.

Zeine, Zeine N. Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism. Lebanon: Khayat's, 1958.

Zimmerman, Micheal E. "The Role of Spiritual Discipline in Learning to Dwell on Earth." Dwelling, Place and Environment. Ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Zwemer, Rev. S.M. Arabia: The Cradle of Islam. New York: Caxton Press, 1900.